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DOLF WYLLARDE

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Captain Amyas

Being the career of D'Arcy Amyas, R.N.R.
Late Master of the R.M.S. *Princess*

By

Dolf Wyllarde

Author of

'Uriah the Hittite,' 'The Story of Eden,' etc.

"There is not a war in the world, no, nor an injustice, but you women are answerable for it; not in that you have provoked, but in that you have not hindered. . . . There is no suffering, no injustice, no misery on the earth, but the guilt of it lies with you."—*Ruskin.*

"Women are the making or the marring of a man. When we see him ruined, by whatever vices, we may know that the women influencing his life have failed in their task."

London

William Heinemann

First printed (6/-), *October* 1904.
Second Impression, August 1906.
Popular 1/- *net Cloth Edition, April* 1916; *July* 1916.

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TO THE NATION

"Very rightly many of us have been insisting, in season and out of season, upon the maintenance of an overwhelmingly strong British Navy, but meanwhile the Mercantile Marine of Great Britain, without which the Navy is useless, has been allowed to drift into such a position that we may wake up any morning and find that it no longer exists."

FRANK T. BULLEN.

What will you give them, England? The Masters of the sea!
Hardly a Captain among them save by title of courtesy,
But they own the sternest prefix of any that yet may be.

They have fed your teeming millions from inaccessible lands;
They have carried your troops to battle—read the record as it stands!
They look for no recognition, Master or 'Foremast Hands.

They go at the word of an Owner where your Navy scarce dare go,
Down to the Horn that spares not, and up to the deathly Floe;
There is never a sea that daunts them, a peril they do not know.

They are trained by the storm and the breakers when the scud is flying free;
They are drilled by the racking night watch while the aching hours flee;
Your Navy fights with your foemen, but your Masters fight the sea.

Slighted like a Militia—looked on with scorn and doubt;
(Harder trained than your Navy, and worked year in, year out!)
Forty per cent. not British—who's Britain to care about?

If your Empire at sea is threatened, on these you must call to serve;
Mocked with their training and titles, you must trust them not to swerve—
The Men of the Merchant Service, and *the Royal Naval Reserve!*

Look to your bulwarks, England! Look to your flag unfurled;
Point in pride to your Navy, the greatest in all the world.
And what of the sister Service across your oceans hurled?

What will you give them, England? A grudging retaining fee;
Neither position or credit, training or real degree,—
The Men of your Merchant Service, the Masters of the sea!

CHAPTER I

"Drake, he was a Devon man, an' rüled the Devon seas,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Rovin' tho' his death fell, he went wi' heart at ease,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
'Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore,
Strike et when your powder's runnin' low;
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven,
An' drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago.'"

HENRY NEWBOLT.

THREE children were standing at the cross-roads playing at ball. The cross-roads are really more of a triangle, an irregular open space where the little lane that climbs up from Trawles is sucked into the big road that runs to Exeter, exactly as a big river sucks in a tributary stream, for though the lane actually crosses it and meanders on into the country beyond, it becomes little more than a footpath on the further side of the highway.

The game was one of their own invention, and consisted in passing the ball so rapidly from hand to hand that none of them could count three before it had passed from D'Arcy to Dorothy, and from Dorothy to Nell. That their chosen playground was the frequent resort of carts, and that their lawless disregard of warning shouts obstructed and annoyed the traffic, added to the charms of the situation. To get sufficient space for the throw Nell stood half-way

up the bank of Trawles Lane, D'Arcy was on the further side of the road, and Dorothy was in the middle of the road itself, with her back to Exeter five miles away. They had placed her there because she was the youngest, and less nimble than Nell in getting out of the way of carts or pedestrians, which were infrequent from Exeter, and she had just succeeded in letting the ball through her fingers and dropping the record, which had reached twenty.

"Butter-fingers!" said Nell viciously, with a stamp of her bare foot into the deep grass in which she was standing.

"The ball's so hard—et hurts my hands!" said Dolly, brushing her yellow hair back from her sweet little face, and looking up with eyes as startlingly blue as the speedwell growing by the roadside. The Germans call this flower "Man's faith," because it is so quickly shattered, but its colour was never rivalled by any painter mixing cobalt or Prussian blue on his palette. Dorothy, by instinct, directed her appeal less to her sister than to the masculine element present. She looked at D'Arcy, who possessed the added vulnerability of not being even kin to her.

"Don't be a muff, Dolly!" was his answer, but he picked up the ball and threw it back to her a shade less swiftly than before.

From D'Arcy to Dorothy—Dorothy to Nell—Nell back to D'Arcy—to and fro flew the ball as quickly as the eye could follow, adding upwards, in the children's growing proficiency at the game, from thirty to forty. As it neared fifty their excitement became intense, for they had never reached so high a number before. Even Dorothy was too absorbed

to notice the sound of a horse's hoofs behind her, and did not alter her central position in the road. The approaching horseman was hidden from Nell, but D'Arcy could see him—a tall, broad man on a powerful horse, riding somewhat carelessly, and evidently not very regardful for the small figure in his path. D'Arcy supposed that the child had heard something coming and would move; but Dorothy, in her interest in the game and strained attention not to slip again, knew nothing until the horse's breath was absolutely on her neck and the rider's "Hulloa!" in her ears, when with a terrified cry she sprang aside, lost her balance, and fell prone on the good red soil of Devon, her bare feet almost under the horse's hoofs.

Before D'Arcy could run to the rescue—and indeed he had not much intention of doing so, being used to see his own sister and his girl playmates in general pick themselves up unaided—the horseman had dismounted, lifted the trembling, crying child, and set her on her feet. He was a big man, inclined to stoutness, with a handsome hairless face, and a full red mouth peculiarly noticeable from his lack of beard. He kept his hands on the child as if to steady her, and spoke in a rich voice, kindly enough.

"Now, little maid, what's the matter? You're not hurt, are you? I thought you would surely move out of Sultan's way!"

Dorothy was more frightened than hurt. She looked up out of the falling frame of her golden hair, with eyes like drenched stars, and the tears rolling down her sun-kissed cheeks. She had the beautiful Devon skin, clear, but burnt like a peach.

The two other children moved up side by side, staring at the stranger with a steadiness which suggested more knowledge of him than he had of them. All three were barefoot, the boy's strong legs hardly more browned by sun and sea than the girls', but though he was hardily dressed in a fisherman's blue jersey and cap, he was more cared-for and less ragged in appearance than the two little girls, whose frocks seemed to have been weather-beaten to a nondescript shade, and were plentifully patched and mended. A slender, rough-haired little fellow he was, with blue eyes somewhat narrowed at the corners as if from a habit of gazing far ahead, delicately-moulded features, and the subtle atmosphere of belonging to gentlefolk about him, in spite of his careless bare feet. The horseman looked at him while he still held Dorothy.

"Well, whose boy are you?"

"I am D'Arcy Amyas."

"Captain Amyas' son?"

"Yes."

He waited breathless, as if afraid that he would be asked the parentage of the little girls, but his interlocutor did not pursue the subject. He was absorbed with Dorothy, to whom he offered a ride on his horse as consolation for her fall, but she declined, shrinking, and still frightened.

"Well, Blue-eyes, I can't do anything for you then! Got over your fright, eh? That's all right. Good-bye, little one." He lifted the child and kissed her smooth flushed cheek, with a smile as he set her down. "You've got a golden head of your own!" he said. "Come and get under my horse's feet and let me pick you up in ten years' time, little maid!"

As he rode away D'Arcy and Nell turned and looked after him with unsmiling faces.

"It's the vicar!" D'Arcy said, staring at the broad upright back, though the rider had worn no clerical garb.

"Yes, I know," said Nell fiercely. Her small brown face worked, and she clenched her tiny hands. Nell was like an elf—her hair, eyes, and skin were different shades of tan, and she was moulded with the dainty lightness of a fairy race. Both the elder girl and boy stood gazing after the figure on horseback until recalled to Dorothy by her sobbing cry.

"I wish he hadn't kissed me!—his face was all horrid and rough. I wish—I wish he hadn't kissed me!"

"Don't sniff, Dolly," said Nell impatiently. "You were a little silly all through. I wish he had offered *me* that ride on his horse!"

"Why, Nell, you couldn't have taken it," D'Arcy said decidedly, "knowin' who he is!"

"Yes; but I wish I hadn't known who he was—then I could have had the ride," said Nell with a strange sigh. Her brown eyes widened and darkened into unchecked longing, and her small breast rose with a sigh too long for a child. "We must go home; and you will be late for your tea, D'Arcy," she said. She made no mention of their own tea, meals were few and far between in their wretched, poverty-stricken home. Nell and Dorothy often went hungry.

"Come back with me and have tea," said D'Arcy kindly, seeing the droop of the younger child's little red mouth. But Nell was firm.

"No, we've been to you three times this week—we

can't sponge," she said briefly. "Come along, Dolly." She seized her sister by the hand and turned her round towards Trawles. "Good-bye!" she said, with a nod at D'Arcy over her shoulder.

"Good-bye, Dolly!" he responded, hardly conscious of his own significant ignoring of Nell. But it was Dolly's yellow hair he followed down the lane, as the sisters raced ahead of him, and Dolly's hunger and disappointment in missing a share of his tea that he dwelt upon as he sauntered home. Nell did not matter. Nell shifted for herself. If D'Arcy had sympathized with her she would have shut him out with some fragment of elfish philosophy which would have left him vaguely wondering why Nell knew these things. But he would have liked to have taken Dolly home to tea, and shared bread-and-jam with her—turn and turn about to bite close up to the crust—and to sit with his brown hand clasped over her little one when no one was looking on or likely to laugh. D'Arcy was eleven, four years older than pretty Dolly with her Devon face, and he called her a baby and petted her as the mood took him.

The lane led down into the heart of Trawles, and D'Arcy followed it, past the water-mill, where he loitered to watch the mossy blades dripping in the sunset, past the brawling stream which ran through Trawles into the sea, quarrelling over its stones after the true fashion of Devon streams—down to the very sea-front itself, where his father's old white house stood eternally fronting a waste of smooth sea, breaking on the shore with a long sigh as monotonous as of some human grief. When Captain Amyas left the sea he set himself down as near it as might be,

and established his dwelling where he might hear and see, night and day, the element on which he had lived for the best part of his life. The Navy did not want him any more, but the sea did. In his blue serge coat, with his strong glass under his arm, the old man used to pace up and down the sea-front, staring out past the inner ring of the Seine or the outer ring of the trawlers and their forty nets, to the round blue horizon where haply some ship of battle might be visible a moment to longing eyes.

The sea was D'Arcy's earliest recollection, and the atmosphere in which he so entirely existed that it might be said to colour his view of life. He saw things through the sea, as it were, and its voice was as familiar to him as the voices in his home. Since his ninth birthday he had been to school in Exeter, so that for six days of the week he became a landsman, shut off from blue water; but he spent Saturday to Monday in his home, and the first welcome of the sea had grown to be to him a moment for which he looked out as regularly as Captain Amyas' "Well, my boy!" from the square arm-chair by the dining-room fire-place. The rail ran out to the coast from Exeter, and for a moment as the train took the curve and swung along the beach, it looked as if one were flying straight out into the water. When there was anything of a sea the waves used to break right over the carriages, and D'Arcy had been secretly culpable of letting down the carriage windows to feel the spray dash in and kiss his face—the sea-mother's keen glad welcome to her boy. The taste of the salt on his lips was as a blessing.

This ingrained love of the sea was to D'Arcy Amyas

what a great inspiration might be to a young genius. He spoke of it no more than a man speaks of his religion; it was deep down at the fibres of his being, but nourished by every accident of his existence. His father's stories of his life while in the Navy, and coming in contact with those friends who still visited him and talked of old commands, and queer shifts in distant naval stations, were enough to set any imaginative boy dreaming. Had his mother lived the bent of D'Arcy's mind might have taken another direction with equal force, for whatever took possession of him did so with a completeness unsuspected by the little circle which made his world. But as things were, his father's influence was paramount in his life, and Alfred Amyas was first and last a sailor. D'Arcy was not a talkative boy, and so boyish in his apparent tastes and pursuits that the suspicion of a highly-strung nature had never attached to him.

Drake House faced sheer on to the sea-wall, with a narrow strip of trim garden in front; D'Arcy went straight in at the open door, and felt about in a corner of the dusky hall until he found some sand shoes, which he slipped on to his bare feet. He went shod in Exeter, but no sooner did he get back to Trawles than he kicked off shoe-leather and conventionality together, and enjoyed himself as much as a colt out at grass before the shoes are nailed on. It was a rule, however, that he should wear shoes in the house, and not leave the trail of his wet or muddy feet up and down the old staircases. As he stood in the hall tying his shoe-strings, a girl ran lightly down the shallow staircase at the further end, followed by a boy some years younger than D'Arcy.

"Where have you been, D'Arcy?" she asked, pausing by his side. "Mother was afraid you were with that dreadful Bertie Culverton, but I know you haven't been, because Jack saw him half-an-hour ago with the trawling boats. He must have been out with them."

"I was playin' quick-catch with Nell and Dolly most of the time," said D'Arcy carelessly. "I haven't seen Bertie. What's against him?"

"Oh—well!" His step-sister hesitated, half afraid of her own accusation now it was demanded in form. "You know he's runnin' dreadfully wild, and gettin' quite like the fisher-boys."

"Don't see what chance he has to do anythin' else," said D'Arcy, flinging his fisherman's cap down on to the hall table. "Where have you been, Jack?"

"With Jasper, pickin' up cowries," said the little boy. Jack Amyas was of a shorter, darker build than either D'Arcy or Millicent, who resembled each other through a mutual resemblance to their father. Jack was a bullet-headed little fellow with a quaint grave face and brown hair. His opinion of himself was nil, and his opinion of D'Arcy was boundless. His admiration of his step-brother met with some return, for D'Arcy was fonder of Jack than of any other human being in his present life—his father always excepted. He made Jack fag for him of course, but he "chummed" with his little brother far more than he did with any of the boys at Exeter though nearer his own age.

"Dad has got a friend with him," said Millicent. "They want to see you, D'Arcy. They've been askin' if you were in."

"Who is it?"

"I don't know. He came down by the afternoon train. They're in there"—she nodded at the closed door of the dining-room.

"All right," said D'Arcy carelessly. "I'll go in and see them first, and come to tea afterwards. Don't wait for me."

But he knew, as he turned the handle of the dining-room door, that neither Jack nor Millicent would dream of beginning their tea without him. The September day was closing in, and the old oak-panelled room was growing dusky. D'Arcy could hardly see which was his father and which the guest in the two figures sitting by the table. The gentlemen were both smoking, and had a glass apiece of whisky-and-water. As D'Arcy stood hesitating at the door he heard the guest speaking, and wondered where he had heard that clear resonant voice before. It was some one he knew, and yet he did not know well, for he could not recall his name. At that moment the gentleman turned and saw the small figure waiting to come forward.

"There's your boy, Amyas," he said. "Come along here, sonny. We want to look at you."

Recollection flashed back upon D'Arcy's mind.

"Of course!" he thought. "It's Mr. Savernake."

CHAPTER II

"For me there's nought I would not leave
For the good Devon land,
Whose orchards down the echoing cleeve
Bedewed with spray-drift stand,
And hardly bear the red fruit up
That shall be next year's cyder-cup."

HENRY NEWBOLT.

MR. SAVERNAKE was a man about fifty years old, even as seen in the half-light—which Captain Amyas immediately altered by ringing for candles—and his shrewd face was exactly in accordance with his voice. His hair, and the little side-whisker on either side of his face, were grizzled, and a fine network of wrinkles encased his eyes. His mouth was fine-lipped, and drawn downwards like an inverted half-moon, but for all that his general expression was cheerful rather than lugubrious. Life, as he had seen it, had not tended to an upward curve of his lips; he was rather lightly cynical, and inclined to raise his eyebrows at mankind in general, for he was a partner in the great shipping firm of Savernake, Cross, and Savernake, and had learned to read men's faces and guess their errands to himself beforehand. Humanity consisted of two kinds of men, he said—the man who wanted to ask a favour, and the man who didn't like to. He had never yet encountered the type which had *no* use for him.

D'Arcy's father, who sat opposite his guest, was a tall old man with a large clean-shaven face and loose grey hair. His voice was startlingly deep and thundered about the old rooms of his house as it had on his own quarter-deck; but his knotted hand had a touch of velvet as he laid it on his son's shoulder.

"You've been enjoying your holiday, D'Arcy, boy!" he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "Skylarking, eh?"

"Not much, sir. I've been rather harmless this afternoon playin' ball with the Culverton girls!" The lad laughed a little, standing between his father's knees, with his face half turned to Mr. Savernake.

"Dolly and Nell, eh? Nice little girls! Which is your sweetheart, D'Arcy? Dolly, eh? Always after the girls, this boy of mine, Savernake!"

"H'mph!" said Bernard Savernake, with a suggestive sound in the roof of his mouth. "So they spoil you, do they, Master D'Arcy?"

The boy coloured slightly, and looked disconcerted. "They are only children," he stammered. Then in the hope of changing the subject—"We saw the vicar, dad!"

"The deuce you did!" exclaimed Captain Amyas in surprise. "Back from his foreign gaming-tables, is he! It's seldom enough he sees his parish. Where did you see him, D'Arcy?"

"At the corner of the lane—he rode in from Exeter, and nearly knocked Dolly down!"

"A nice piece of work suited to him! He'd about end the family that way—works the father to death, and then rides down the children. It's just like this, Savernake: our vicar is the Hon. George Gore-Dalkeith—and a damn bad lot too! He is too fine a

gentleman to look after his parish, so he leaves all the work to his curate-in-charge, who is an underfed, underpaid, starved rat of a thing, slaving away day and night while the vicar spends his days at Monte Carlo!"

"But I should have thought such a scandal as that would have got about, and the man been turned out of his living! Surely you needn't endure it passively?"

Captain Amyas shrugged his broad shoulders. "The living is in the gift of his father, Lord Branscombe. What are we to do? If we made a demonstration down here in Trawles, ten chances to one we should do more harm than good, and get the curate, Sydney Culverton, into trouble. We don't want that, do we, D'Arcy? He is the father of the two girls I joke D'Arcy about, and one boy. Nell and Dolly are dear little souls, but I'm afraid Bertie is having a rough bringing-up."

"It doesn't follow that that will hurt him, if he is the right stuff, though I grant you that education is the tamer of the wild beast in man. Where do you go to school, D'Arcy?"

"In Exeter, Mr. Savernake," said the boy, turning round to face the keen eyes that he liked by instinct.

"Ah! And you like it?"

"Pretty well."

"No boy says 'Very well' to school, I suppose. Well, what do you want to be?"

"I am going to sea!" said D'Arcy, with a slight hesitation, and a look of surprise at the question which seemed to him superfluous.

"Because your father did before you, I suppose. We

are terribly imitative animals. Didn't I see some very clever sketches of yours when I was last here?"

"I can draw a little," admitted the boy reluctantly. He wondered whither all this was tending. The very question as to his future plans in life, when he felt he *could* be nothing but a sailor, was a vague discomfort.

"Well, I thought you showed a great deal of talent. Don't you feel you want to develop the gift? Wouldn't you like to be an artist?"

"*No!*" The one word was a thunderous echo of Captain Amyas' own tones, and the boy quivered as he faced Mr. Savernake with indrawn lips. "I want to go to sea—I must go—I want it so much!"

Mr. Savernake looked at the young set face steadily for a minute. Then he spoke over D'Arcy's head to his father.

"Did you say you couldn't afford to put him into the Navy, Amyas?"

"Yes; unfortunately it must be the Merchant Service."

"The Merchant Service, with that temperament! . . . My dear fellow, in my opinion you are mad."

"Why? The boy's a born sailor—you can see for yourself. Of course you know more of the ins and outs of the Service than I do, but even if it's rough it won't choke *my* son off!"

"It is not the roughness, though it's a hard life at first," said Mr. Savernake with some reserve.

"The pay and promotion? Damn it, Savernake, it can't be worse than the Navy!"

"It is not the pay and promotion—slow though they both are. With your interest and influence they will be moderately fast. It is not even the absence of

any pension, or provision for the future, that I should urge as an insuperable objection in this case."

"The life itself then?"

"Yes, the life itself—under certain circumstances. Send the boy away, Amyas; I want to talk to you, and I can't dissect him before his face. Good-bye, D'Arcy—you don't want to shake hands with me, do you? Think I'm trying to veto the desire of your life! Never mind—you will probably beat me yet. Run off to your tea—and don't want things '*so much*,' if you can help it, through your life, for the peace of your fellow-creatures!"

There was silence for a minute while the boy went slowly and laggingly out of the room. He shut the door firmly behind him, and then Mr. Savernake spoke with a suddenness that made Captain Amyas jump.

"The boy's exactly like his mother!"

Captain Amyas was not used to having his tender memories dragged out like this; his grim old face set itself with an expression which might have greeted an intrusion on to the bridge of his old command.

"Come, old friend, don't be annoyed with me!" Savernake said gently. "It seems to me only yesterday that you were trembling and sweating for fear Ruby Lyston would not have you—a great hard-fisted fellow like you!"

The old man's face altered. The hardness went out of it, and his eyes looked dim through his quivering smile. "I've never got over her death, Bernard!" he said huskily. "She was the one real woman for me: There's only one in most men's lives. I came to it late too—I was fifty and she twenty-three, and I think

I gave her a double share of love for that very reason, just as if I'd stored it up for her all those extra years! I paid her memory the compliment of marrying a year after her death, for I simply couldn't bear the loneliness; but much as I care for Mary—and she's been a good wife, and good to the boy—it's nothing to those two short years!"

Savernake looked at him with honest pity. He saw the old knotted hand furtively wipe the dim blue eyes, and he spoke in a meditative tone.

"Yes, Ruby Lyston—art-student and art-dreamer, with a taste for all the beautiful and impracticable things in the world. A slip of a girl she was, wasn't she?—and held you in the hollow of her hand! Some natures seem born to hold sway over all others that come in contact with them. But Ruby reigned tenderly always."

The sailor nodded, gulped down the remainder of his grog, and looked steadily at the speaker. "Well, what's all this for?" he said.

"I only wanted to remind you what she was like," said Savernake quietly. "Can't you see that the boy has got her very nature? That wanting things 'so much'—that is just Ruby! The artistic temperament, my dear Amyas, however much it may be disguised by some leaven of yourself in the lad. D'Arcy—there's a nice foreign name for the son of an English sailor!—would be safer expending that intensity of his in writing poems or painting pictures. It sounds less healthy than going to sea, but I assure you that it is far better calculated to work the devil out of him!"

"To call him D'Arcy was a fancy of Ruby's,"

Captain Amyas explained. "I would rather have named him Alfred after myself. But it was her choice and the boy is her boy. I can't forget that, Bernard; and if he were set on Art, as you think he should be"—the Captain made a wry face as if the word were hard to swallow—"I should have let him have his way, like as not. But you can see for yourself that his heart 's at sea! I wasn't near so keen myself as a youngster."

"No, and that's just why I warn you. If the lad had a mere adventurous love of travel, or a practical liking for boats, I should say give him a voyage or so anyway, and see if it gets knocked out of him. If it doesn't he'll do. But your boy isn't quite like other boys--I'll pay Ruby's son that compliment!—he's what the Scotch call 'glamoured,' and he would be just as much set on painting or music, or even more the stage, if his taste that way had been fostered. But it hasn't—you've lived Sea, and preached Sea, down here in Trawles, until the child has taken it like a fever which he could hardly avoid catching."

"Well, and what if he has?" cried Amyas hotly. "It's the right profession for him, and I say it. Hasn't he got my blood in his veins? And if he has his mother's too—the 'artistic' temperament you talk so glibly of, and God knows what you mean!—will a touch of romance make him any the worse a sailor? If he appreciates the wonderful and beautiful world he will see as no landsman sees it—I say so much the better!"

Savernake drummed with his fingers on the table for a minute in silence. Then he looked up, opened

his lips as if to speak hastily, closed them firmly again into their half-moon, and drew a long breath.

"You are talking like a fool!" he said at last deliberately. "You think of D'Arcy going through the life you led, under the strict discipline and clean training of the Navy. You do not know what the Merchant Service means; it is not the Navy with even rougher conditions (and in your day it must have been a harsh breaking-in, I admit!), though you may think so. It means a lot more liberty, and temptations which may be no greater than those you experienced, but set in a different direction. Don't misunderstand me—it is a great profession, that of our Mercantile Marine; for some men it is the very best profession, for a few the only one. But for a boy like D'Arcy it is, I take it, the most fatal training that you could give him."

"Well, on my life, Savernake, I don't see why! The boy is under control of his Skipper, and it's a pretty severe control I don't doubt, if I may judge by some of the men I've met! Good seamen, splendid fellows, but a bit of the martinet in them. If they knock him about, and destroy the poetry of the life for him, it's the best thing possible according to you!"

"That is not what I mean. A rough experience he certainly may have, and if he is as secretly impressionable as I take him to be, you will find he has taken in a lot of evil as cargo by the time he is back from his first voyage. The actual roughness and hardships will not hurt him, but the moral atmosphere about him will. Of course you can pick your Skipper to a certain extent, and I have no doubt that I can help you there. But there is no saying what

influences will be at work moulding a very pliable nature. Then, too, I suppose you want your son to rise?"

"Of course I do, as high as help or advice can get him. I can't see him Captain of an ironclad, but I hope he will be Master of one of the biggest floating hotels in the seven seas, yet!"

"Exactly—a fourteen-thousand-ton Liner, carrying hundreds of first-class passengers—over a thousand souls on board all told; with unlimited power over his own little realm, cut off from shore restraint, and all that nervous excitability in him to find an outlet! For, take it how you will, men shut up in their own ships with things too much their own way, and natural appetites to satisfy, have a lot of temptation to face. It's odds if they don't drink, or gamble, or find some mischief to do. It wants a more level head than D'Arcy's, and a more sluggish nature, to make the best Merchant Skipper, Amyas!"

"All that you say doesn't convince me that the boy has not a vocation for the sea," said the Captain obstinately. "You've got theories about human nature, Savernake, and you've studied character until it's your hobby. The boy's not a violin string—he's just a boy."

"Just a boy—and by and bye just a man!" said Savernake with a dry smile. "Well, have your own way, for you won't be warned. Put the boy into the Merchant Service, and see what comes of it. By Jove! I must be getting to the station. I want to catch the fast up-train."

"My dear fellow, you won't rush off like this? Why, you only came down by the four o'clock. And

out of a favour to me too! I shall feel my hospitality outraged if you don't stay and dine. You've hardly seen my wife as yet. Let us put you up."

"Can't, my dear Captain. Business is great just now, and I sandwiched you in between a committee meeting and a big consignment. I must not miss that train for all I am worth. Don't come to the station with me—I shall be quicker alone."

"Well, if you must go, good-bye. And I may count on your help when the time comes, in spite of your prejudice?"

"Yes," said Savernake, stopping suddenly on his way to the door. "But on one condition. Send D'Arcy to the *Worcester* to be trained, and bring him to me when he has done his two years. I'll find him a berth in one of our sailing ships, and after his time is through put him into a 'tramp,' and so on to the coveted Liner. But I will not undertake him as raw material. Other lads I might, but not your son. Good-night!"

He stepped into the dimly-lit hall, opened the door for himself, and walked briskly off down the road to the railway. It was only a short distance, and as he went the smooth Devon sea sighed an accompaniment at his side all the way. The long roar of its quiet voice sounded strange and ominous to his ears.

"He wanted to go to sea so much! he felt he *must* go!" he repeated, glancing with quick eyes over the heaving expanse. "What more will he feel that he must do or have before he has done? The worst of men who feel that they 'want' so intensely, is generally that the very strength of their desire accomplishes its object, whatever the consequences may be."

CHAPTER III

"Then stooped the Lord, and He called the good sea up to Him,
And 'stablished his borders unto all eternity,
That such as have no pleasure
For to praise the Lord by measure,
They may enter into galleons and serve Him on the sea.

Sun, wind, and cloud shall fail not from the face of it,
Stinging, ringing spindrift, and the fulmar flying free;
And the ships shall go abroad
To the Glory of the Lord
Who heard the silly sailor-folk and gave them back their sea!"

RUDYARD KIPLING.

D'ARCY did not go to the children's sanctum for tea when he left the dining-room. He stood outside instead, hesitating a moment, with his light brows drawn into a knot that altered his face in a grotesque fashion. For a moment the man was shadowed forth in the boy, and his face was the face he would wear twenty years hence.

After a minute he deliberately put his foot up on a hall chair, and began taking off his shoes. His step-mother came into the hall while he was engaged on the operation, and stood looking at him indulgently. She was one of those large shapeless women with brown hair who leave no distinct impression of their features on a stranger's mind, save that they look sensible and matter-of-fact.

"Going out, or coming in, D'Arcy?" she said pleasantly.

"I'm goin' out," the boy answered in a curiously repressed tone. "Would you mind lettin' Milly and Jack know? They think I'm comin', and they'll wait."

"Mary shall tell them," said Mrs Amyas amicably. She never thought of raising an objection to D'Arcy's fashion of spending any portion of his holiday, though had it been Jack who had wished to be absent from a meal she would have vetoed it at once. As Captain Amyas had said, she had been a good foster-mother to the orphaned baby whom she undertook at twelve months old, and if there were any one to whom she showed indulgence, even when her balanced judgment condemned it, it was to her step-son. Deep down in her heart there was a little humble admiration for the dead mother whose memory she knew that her husband still quivered to call up. Ruby was to her a creature of some romance, whom she neither dreamed nor aimed at supplanting; and she could not help regarding Ruby's son as on a slightly different footing to her own boy and girl, though she might love them more as nearer and dearer creatures. D'Arcy was endowed by her with certain fine characteristics which he probably did not possess, though her eyes saw truly that he shared in that alien strain which divided him and his mother from herself. She did not spoil him exactly, but she allowed him to go his own way with less superintendence than her own boy.

"Your father has been talking to you, I suppose, about your future, and you want to think it over?" she said, patting the shoulder under the blue woollen jersey. It shrank a little, but he made no assent. "I know he wanted to," she went on, not at all discom-

posed by his silence. "But if you miss your tea, you'll be hungry. Will you run and ask cook to give you a bit of bread-and-butter, or how?"

"Oh, I'll have it with Jasper," said the boy impatiently, and kicking off his loosened shoes stood free, barefoot again, on the threshold.

He breathed more freely as he ran across the narrow road, clambered over the low sea-wall, and dropped on to the beach. Under the warm red cliff to his right were a little zinc building, hardly as large as a two-room cottage, some boats drawn up above the water-line, and a choice collection of nets spread out around. This was Jasper's cottage, and the favourite resort of the children, who watched the old man mend his nets and clean the fish on which he principally lived, and sometimes persuaded him to take them out when he and his boat went fishing. He was not one of the regular trawlers who drove their trade in Trawles bay, though he could throw a net and haul with any of them, and sometimes joined the Seine. Jasper held a somewhat solitary position in his combination of trades, for he was employed as a carpenter by the residents in Trawles, and in the summer, when visitors came, he was on hire for a shilling an hour to row them round the bay, and point out Exmouth in the distance, which was about all the excitement the excursion offered.

D'Arcy went up the sand and sat on the edge of a boat with his feet dangling. He did not call out for Jasper, who was probably eating shrimps inside his zinc residence, nor did he hanker after the foregone tea at all. He was thinking, as he sat staring out across the quiet September evening and the full calm

flood of the sea. The sunset had faded until the waters were no longer scarlet and golden, and a full moon had come up, and even now was sending a long ripple of light across the placid sea. This effect of moonlight before daylight had passed was one that always fascinated D'Arcy. He was conscious of the pleasure it gave him even now, as he sat scowling on the edge of the tilted boat.

He had never had his chosen profession called in question before, and it had startled him. *Of course* he was going to sea! He had been sure of it since the time when his blue eyes first looked consciously upon its familiar presence in his life. It had greeted him like an old friend every morning of his existence until his ninth year, and at night the voice of it was in all his slumbers, though his small room was at the back of the house. D'Arcy had never shared the fear of the dark which besets most nervous children. He drew up his blind to the roller, threw open his window, even during the mild Devon winter, and listened to the familiar slurring of the sea over the sand only a few yards away, until he fell asleep.

The brief conversation between his father and Mr. Savernake and himself had shaken his confidence in the inevitable. Supposing his father failed to carry out their mutual plan! He was old enough to realize that the satisfactory fulfilment of his projects lay largely in his elders' hands, and the usual boyish fancy for "running away to sea" was practically impossible, as he was shrewd enough to see. Captain Amyas had spoken to him and before him frankly enough to give him some grasp of the technicalities of the Merchant Service. Skippers were not so eager to

take untrained and useless lads that he had only to ask and have. There were scores of apprentices from the *Worcester* and the *Conway*, ready and eager for their first voyage, and it was not likely that without their advantages he would take precedence. No, the power lay in the hands of his elders. He ground his teeth, and swung his foot backwards and forwards, so that his small hard heel struck the boat's side rhythmically. He felt as if Mr. Savernake had entered in as a thief in the night to take away his birthright. A man whom he had always liked, and should have picked out from among his father's old friends as well-dispositioned towards himself! And the worst of it was he could not hate Bernard Savernake, in spite of that soul-disturbing talk. He liked the clean frank face and the clear eyes fronting his own; he liked the man's very voice—it rang true. And he realized that Savernake had been quite honest and disinterested and truth of some sort was in his words, much as he would rather have disbelieved it. There was a horrid adaptability in D'Arcy that forced him to see two sides to every question. He felt that Mr. Savernake had his reasons, though they reduced a boy's whole scheme of existence to chaos.

And yet—he wanted to go to sea so badly!

Why should he not? What was there against it? Why should he be less of a sailor than his father? Into the Navy he could not go; that was a grief, but not a great one, because Captain Amyas, in his own generous judgment, had placed both Services on an equality to his mind. He would be only "Master" instead of Captain—but he would be the Skipper of the biggest Liner afloat before he

had done, a ship that his father himself would admire!

"I will be Captain Amyas too, some day—at least I will be called so," said D'Arcy, sitting on the old boat, a slim boyish figure with a rough fair head and bare legs, and with all the beauty of fair Devon as a background. He was for once unconscious of his own picturesque suitability, in his earnestness, though as a rule that was an unacknowledged pleasure in the recesses of his mind.

"And then I will come home and marry Dolly, and settle down here in a nice little home of my own to come back to between trips." It was a dream not to be parted from lightly.

His gaze went out hungrily over the quiet sea, which only heaved in the windless night, and broke in long shallow ripples along the sands. The shore at Trawles is singularly flat, so much so that the water is shallow for a long way out into the bay, and in summer as still as a lagoon. D'Arcy loved it best perhaps when the south-west wind was up, for then the day and night were full of music. The long waves came rolling in full of froth, breaking far out into the bay, and the manes of the awful white horses showed above the broken bit of cliff known as the Dog Rock, that guards the east side of Trawles. It was beautiful then, and wonderful to watch.

As night fell the chill of early autumn made the boy shiver. His pent-up emotion and an empty stomach caused him to feel the misery of his own uncertainty, and he fretted for the hope that might not be fulfilled. Still he did not attempt to go home, until a heavy step came along the sea-front, and a

big form lumbered over the sea-wall and along the sand to the lonely little figure by the boat. It was Captain Amyas come to look for his son, very much as a big old fighting walrus might look for a calf which he feared had got hurt in a scuffle. He put his large hand on the boy's shoulder, and leaned up against the boat beside him.

"What is it, D'Arcy?"

"I was thinkin', dad."

The old sea-captain put his great arm about the small nervous figure as tenderly as though he were man and woman too.

"Thinking I'm not going to send you to sea?"

"Y—yes,—and wonderin' if I could—bear it."

The old man looked down at the boy—Ruby's boy!—and he laughed a little, but as if he were not far off tears.

"Why, you don't think I'll let a son of mine be a land-lubber! Don't go fretting your heart out, old fellow. You shall be a sailor, though all the ship-owners in existence shook their silly heads over it!"

D'Arcy slipped from the boat and stood by his father's side, drawing a long breath. It seemed to be wrenched up out of the very roots of his being. But his speech was as laconic as usual.

"All right, sir! I'm safe with that. And—and thank you!"

The small brown hand slipped into the large one, and the two gripped each other. D'Arcy turned cheerfully from his late Gethsemane and walked home with his father, side by side through the silver night.

CHAPTER IV

"Boy and girl we have played together—
Hearts in slumber and heads in air!
Maiden trim with the floating feather,
Sailor-lad with a future clear.
Snatching a kiss as he climbed the stair,—
('Kiss me!' he said, on the twilight stair,
Half for pastime and half in sorrow,)—
Sailor-lad who would sail to-morrow
Out to the uttermost hemisphere."

VIOLET FANE.

WHEN D'Arcy left school at thirteen he went straight to the *Worcester*, and spent the next three years of his life in learning as much navigation and seamanship as could be knocked into him without the practical experience of being out of sight of land for six months at a stretch. He found himself among gentlemen on the training ship, and with an inherent facility for taking the tone of his surroundings, he was a gentleman himself—so much so that Captain Amyas was full of innocent pride over him, and openly flouted at Bernard Savernake's croaking, pointing to the result of the experiment to prove that his disregard of it had been the wisest course to pursue.

It was at this period of his life that D'Arcy learned the necessity of knowing how to fight—an accomplishment for whose use he had need to the end of his career. It came about through a big tussle with

a bully on the training ship, whereat both boys were so well matched that neither of them could beat the other, and they returned from their encounter on the Kentish bank of the river in such a state that the lieutenant in charge could not recognize them. The bully had had a little more weight and less persistence than his antagonist; but D'Arcy, pondering over things, came to the conclusion that science was the real necessity. So when he was through his apprenticeship he qualified for his first voyage as an officer by going to a trainer—an old light-weight champion who knocked beginners about for a consideration—and explained his wishes.

"Look here," said the boxer, "is it real .... science you want, or .... up-and-down fighting?"

"I expect it's the fightin'," said D'Arcy, after a moment's consideration. "I want to be able to take care of myself, and I've got to handle men who won't stop for any theories or rules of boxin'."

"Right you are," said the professional placidly. "Come and 'it me, and do it 'ard!"

So they closed after a few feints, and fought it out up and down the training space. And D'Arcy learned what the exact advantages of his height and weight were, which of course differ with every man, and how to throw his opponent, and which guard to use for the unskilled blows he might have to meet. That was better fighting than on the Rotherhithe shore by the *Worcester*, and the practical knowledge was beyond price. When D'Arcy knocked a man down in his first voyage as second Mate, and broke his jaw, he laid the foundations of respect for himself in the foc's'le, and he never had much trouble with his men

after, though his reputation for being "a bruiser" was the result of luck rather than judgment. The man whose jaw was sacrificed had been insolent through drink, but no one knew that the boy turned sick for one half-minute before he struck out, or that the savage flushed red of his face had been preceded by a sickly pallor of fear. That was a side of Amyas' character happily undiscernible by the world at large.

During the last part of his training on the *Worcester* D'Arcy was growing straight and tall, though he would never be as big as his father; his hair was still fair, his face thin, and brown, and healthy, and his blue eyes puckered at the corners. He was affectionate to Milly, of whose female prettiness he was rather proud, and took her photo back with him after his first holiday, whereupon all the boys about his own age who were his special "mates" fell in love with it, and composed nigger serenades in her honour. Millicent's beauty matured early, and at fifteen she looked nearly twenty. D'Arcy found that from the possession of such a sister much honour accrued to him, and he cherished her accordingly, the while his real affection remained Jack's. His step-brother was following in the path that he had trod at Exeter, and was as bullet-headed and as much a worshipper of D'Arcy as ever. It had long since been decided to make him a doctor, from some fancied suitability in him, without consulting his boyish taste at all.

Nell and Dolly Culverton were growing up also, in their uncomfortable home, very much as the innocent daisies bloom in the midst of an uncultivated common. There were no propitious circumstances in their up-

bringing; they were still often hungry, and they outgrew their ragged frocks long before there was any chance of their being replaced. And yet D'Arcy, home from the *Worcester* in all the glory of newly-acquired knowledge and the self-respect that training gives, recognized a quaint originality in Nell that he never found in any other girl, while Dolly—ah, Dolly! with her Devon face, and the yellow hair to frame it! All the wild roses had got into her cheeks, and her speedwell eyes had grown shy, and did not appeal to D'Arcy to come to her rescue as of yore. Dorothy was twelve when D'Arcy sailed away on his first voyage in one of Savernake, Cross, and Savernake's big sailing ships, and if he took a kiss with him to sweeten those long twelve months that must pass before his return, only the Devon lanes knew it.

I suppose every Liner Officer remembers his first voyage in a sailing ship with mingled horror and enthusiasm. It is so different to the law and order of the *Worcester*, its drawbacks are such impossible ones, and its teaching so disheartening. On the other hand, will any after-motion of a rolling, thumping steamer, though she be the best afloat, come up to that suggestion of flying with living wings through an element of velvet, sacred to a big ship with all her canvas straining before a favourable wind?

It was the lack of cleanliness that D'Arcy felt most. There were times when he would have given every chance of future happiness to throw off his unwashed clothes and plunge into the buoyant water dancing tantalizingly all round them.

"Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to—wash!"

In the old Devon days cleanliness had become second nature—a natural element. There was the whole sea to swim in, though there had been no fresh little stream trickling through the heart of Trawles; on the *Worcester* not to wash would have been to call down on one's head criticisms searching in their brutality, let alone its being compulsory. But here, on the *Mistress*, to wash once a week was a luxury. How often D'Arcy thought thirstily of the limpid water rushing through Trawles to the sea, as he lay in his hot uncomfortable berth in the after-part of the ship! There were three other apprentices besides himself; he liked them all, but he could have wished the space allotted to them for sleeping, and eating, and spending their spare time—all in one—had been larger and less filthy. He did not desire other boys crowded on him, to choke out what breathing space and sweetness there might be, and he had a suspicion that he was not, himself, a desirable object to be near.

Therefore his happiest time was in his night watch, when he stood in the free air, and felt the ship going kindly through a quiet sea, and saw the wonders of the tropic nights, and such vast spaces of sky as no landsman can conceive of, even though he lived in the middle of Exmoor. Fortunately for himself D'Arcy's first voyage took place under the auspices of a Captain who handled his apprentices leniently, and if he did not take much trouble to see that they were learning their business, they were at least not set to fag for the men, and in consequence they did not learn to sleep upright while on duty because they were worn out all day. There was no part of his

profession that D'Arcy really shirked, and there was no single inch of the ship he did not love, despite her drawbacks. More especially he liked to hear the whimper of the ropes through the sheaves, and to see the sails trimmed. "All hands shorten sail" was a real joy, for then his duty was at the mizzen, and he would tingle with excitement as he went aloft and hung on as only a sailor can in the strength of a rising gale.

"I shall throw up the sea and turn lubber!" one of the other boys said to him as they lay in port at Bombay. "I'm sick of dirty quarters and salt beef! If it's all to be like this it's not good enough. My father wanted me to go into his business. He'll be glad enough if I give this up."

"I shall stick on," said D'Arcy. "It won't be always like this—and it's our own fault for not cleanin' our house."

"Who cares whether we do or not? *We* don't belong to the after-guard—yet! And where's the water to come from? We can't clean ourselves if we can the berths. If you can put up with this for the sake of what's to come, you must be a long sight keener than I am."

"I'm no fonder of dirt than you!" retorted D'Arcy. "But there's things to make up." He thought of the piles of sails spread above his head in mid ocean, of the sounds and scents of the ship, and he looked round the decks with affectionate eyes, though the *Mistress* was by no means a romantic object in harbour. He did not say what he felt, but he knew that the rough coarse life was worth bearing because the glamour held him still and stood him in good

stead. He *would* learn, in spite of meeting with little encouragement, not because he was a boy with an impetus to go to the front under any circumstances, but because there was not a detail about the ship that was not of interest to him. The *Mistress* was his hobby; he watched the men at their work when he was allowed, and asked questions which were occasionally answered. The Mate was a grim and silent person whom D'Arcy had seen on one occasion hurl a man overboard and thereby check a possible mutiny amongst the crew, but the boy discovered that if he could be encountered alone, particularly when things were going easily with the ship, he was as approachable as the mildest of men. His maxims were probably less noticeable for their moral aspect than for their practical use in the life he had led, and it was chiefly from this mentor that the apprentice imbibed wisdom.

D'Arcy came back from that first voyage with a different atmosphere about him than he had brought from the *Worcester*. It was not only that he was rougher in manner, for with his facility for taking the tone of his surroundings, he dropped or hid that in the first twenty-four hours; but there was a considerable portion of the bloom rubbed off his mind. There was very little evil that he had not heard of, though he packed it away into the storehouse of his mind to be rendered up only when called for, and many of his boyish illusions had been utterly destroyed. He had learned to swear with a fluency and diversity which would have considerably surprised his father had he heard it. But D'Arcy had the *nous* not to display this accomplishment. He

was quiet and affectionate to his father, and the old man thought him grown more manly and self-reliant. Captain Amyas was ailing at the time of D'Arcy's return, and his son thought him aged very much. He lingered on for a year or so, and then caught a chill and died when D'Arcy was in his eighteenth year, away at sea. He returned from his third voyage to find his father's old corner empty, and the house by the sea singularly silent and dreary, for Mrs. Amyas and Millicent were all alone there, Jack being still at school.

His father's death was a shock to D'Arcy, though he might have expected it. He was shipping as third Mate next voyage, and had already got his certificate for second. He missed Captain Amyas' hearty approval and interest in his career more than he ever said, and the usually happy memory of his leave on shore was darkened.

From third Mate he rose to second without much delay, thanks to the influence behind him, and the fact that Savernakes were rapidly advancing to their final position as one of the biggest shipping firms ; they owned, at this time, a goodly number of sailing ships as well as cargo "tramps," from which they were gradually amassing capital for the building of those great Liners which were the goal of D'Arcy's ambition. They had already a certain number of passenger boats, and during the next ten years advanced rapidly to that unique position they finally held, training their Officers especially for their own service, and placing them carefully by the qualifications they displayed for each branch of their owners' business. There were men who never moved out

of the sailing ships, others who, unless content to work cargo, might leave the employ of the firm; but if they were judged unfitted for the higher positions no seniority or discontent would obtain it for them. The majority of the men connected with the great firm, however, found themselves treated generously and justly, and a berth in one of Savernakes' boats was much more often vainly coveted than it was abandoned.

D'Arcy passed for Master before he was Mate or Chief Officer, according to the peculiar demands of shipowners, who hold a tradition that a certificate issued by the Board of Trade can produce efficiency in a young man who has fulfilled no more responsible post than that of third Mate! If such holders of certificates could, on the strength of them, obtain a Master's position, the safety of the ship ought to be upon the heads of those who grant such a proof of competency before the holder can have had experience to warrant it. That the grade is merely theoretical is proved by the fact that the biggest companies will not give a young man a position as officer in a Liner at all until he has passed for Master—therefore he must be Master before he may have ever been Mate, at all events of a steamer! D'Arcy did not attain to the dignity of a first Mate's berth until he was twenty-two, when he obtained it on a smaller sailing ship than the *Mistress*, and had the good fortune to encounter such weather off the Horn as made his Skipper tighten his lips and pathetically inquire of Providence why it had seen fit to treat them to this with practically no one to help him,—for the second Mate was more inexperienced yet.

D'Arcy Amyas set his lips too, and faced the fact that he had got his first chance.

There had been a dead calm—a calm off the Horn!—and about sunset the wind began to rise fitfully, and the Officers looked at the canvas with which the ship was crowded to catch the faintest breeze, and the crew tumbled to in a hurry when they were ordered to shorten sail. So sudden was the storm that the canvas was got in with the utmost difficulty, and even when she was "snugged down" the ship was by no means pleasant. She was a big boat, deeply laden, and did not behave well in a heavy sea. To keep her running they had left the lower topsails and foresails set, and every now and then as the sea rose she took it green, and the water came tumbling inboard with a sound like the cracking of a big drum—the smash on the iron deck very much resembled the splitting of stretched parchment.

All through that delirious, howling night Master and Mate were on duty, conning the ship more by instinct it seemed than by judgment, until when morning broke over the mountainous sea she had weathered a breeze which brought D'Arcy's heart into his throat when he recalled it. And yet he was again conscious of the stimulating excitement all through his trial—of rising to the demand on him, and exulting in his own strength. He knew the ship, every inch of her. He felt as though there were some electric sympathy between them, so that he knew her needs before the anger in her sails was audible to the practised ears straining to help her, and when in the grey of the ghastly morning Master and Mate came face to face for a moment with breathing space for

more than orders, the older man brought his hand down on D'Arcy's shoulder with a strength that made him reel as the wind had not done.

"We're through the worst of it!" he said. "And you're a —— good sailor!"

The lighter canvas was being set, and she was running fast before the rack of the storm. The colour of his triumph was still in D'Arcy's tired face as he went round once more to see that all was well, and then turned in for a short sleep of utter exhaustion.

It is probable that the Captain's opinion found vent at head-quarters, for D'Arcy was excited on his return by a hint from his firm that it would be wise of him to take his certificate as Master-extra, and then to apply for an exchange to a steamer. D'Arcy went down into Devonshire bearing his blushing honours thick upon him, and only regretting that no one in his home circle could really understand his achievement. Mrs. Amyas and Milly were adoring, but all that they could grasp was that Amyas had been in such a storm that his ship was nearly lost, at which they shuddered and held their breath, and rejoiced over him as one recovered from death. But the technical value of what he had done they could not understand. He was only D'Arcy Amyas in Trawles, to be adored on account of his uniform and his gold lace, and some special cleverness, it almost seemed to him, in the fact that he had grown from a boy into a man. But Mate of the *Hausfrau* he was not to them, for that full-meaninged title rang in their ears but as sounding brass.

And yet that visit to his native spot was a land-

mark in his life, unsatisfactory though he was inclined to describe it. For strolling up through Trawles, on out of the quaint little village to a lane leading vaguely "into the heart o' Devon," he came face to face with a tall maiden in a limp cotton gown, her hands full of dog-roses—the month was June—and her homely sun-bonnet hiding a face made out of dewy rose petals and blue sky framed with yellow corn. D'Arcy barred the way to the shy feet that would have fled by him, and held out his hard brown hand.

"Haven't you time to speak to a friend, Dorothy? You've forgotten me!"

"No—I knew you were down. I saw you in church on Sunday."

"I should never have guessed it. Your hymn-book got all your attention."

The maiden lips declined to answer him, shut musingly one on the other like ripe fruit.

"Are you as shy with all your playmates, Dolly?"

"I'm goin' home," murmured the girl in distress. "Please don't stop me!"

Eighteen years spent in the heart of the West country do not induce too fluent conversation. Dolly's eyes spoke, and her tempting bloom; but the innocent brains under the yellow hair prompted her rather to be silent. It needed all D'Arcy's audacity of experience to manage the situation. But he was by no means innocent or without a former guide in such matters. He had done such things in foreign ports as he would not think of here, where the West country took him back into boyhood again. It might have made him bashful, coming within close proximity of

the yellow-haired girl with her hands full of flowers. But it did not, because he pushed such memories rudely aside—his claim to approach being, however, the honourable plea that he put no other woman he had wooed on the same level as he did her.

"I've been thinkin' of you half the year—right out on the other side of the world, Dolly—and you treat me like this! Nights out on deck I've shared the watch with you. Haven't you anythin' kind to say to me?"

Dolly's home, the neglected poverty-stricken house the curate rented, was only beyond a turn in the lane. She had only to run to safety. But she stood still, and her cheeks bloomed like the roses.

"I'm glad to see you back—D'Arcy!" she breathed, the welcome being a halting one at best. But the Mate of the *Hausfrau* found it very good. He moved a trifle nearer, and his brown face met the one under the safe screen of the sun-bonnet, and so he kissed her—gently, for all his eagerness and the lurid proficiency of which—thank God!—she had no knowledge. The idyl in the Devonshire lane might have lasted longer but for the whistle of a ploughboy coming in from outlying districts, which made D'Arcy start and draw his arm away, and the girl brush past him and flee homeward, rosy as the sunset.

As she reached her own gate a cottager's child, straying in the road, stared up at her with wondering eyes, and pointed to the flowers in her hands—thorny roses, still moist with a morning shower.

"Where 'd ye get they farloes to?" it said.

"Out of Paradise!" Dolly answered dreamily, and her cheeks glowed as though indeed the Love-Angel touched them.

CHAPTER V

"Where have you been, O wandering soul?
I have journeyed far and wide;
I drift to a home in any port,
Drift out upon any tide.

And what have you lost, O restless soul?
I have left, it seemeth me,
A bit of my youth in all the ports
That are clustered round the sea."

LAURENCE HOPE.

D'ARCY took many plans away with him from Trawles. His step-mother and Millicent were keeping on the old home—Drake House—and living there quietly enough on a modest income. Captain Amyas had left a little money, and disposed of it so that when D'Arcy became Mate on a Liner—or, otherwise, in his thirtieth year—he came into two hundred a year, but until that time the womenkind would have the use of it as well as their own portion. This he had done partly because some one had once told him that Officers in the Merchant Service could not keep out of debt without private means on the "swagger Lines," but also to keep D'Arcy from indiscriminate marriage before he had a fairly good place in his profession. It did not have the desired effect, because D'Arcy, hurrying off to Southampton to join his ship for his last sailing voyage, decided that he would marry Dorothy Culverton as soon as he got

his certificate for Master-extra on his return, and settle her in Drake House with his other female belongings. There was plenty of room in the old house, which he never meant to give up, and nobody would raise any objection. Drake House had had a special attraction to D'Arcy as a boy from its very name; Drake was his hero—what Devonshire boy with a love of the sea in him has not regarded Drake as a special patron saint of his birthplace, while the relics of him are still a matter for pride in Exeter and Plymouth, and burned over the records of his wonderful voyages? Curled up in the window-seat of Drake House, D'Arcy had pored over books that told of those great discoveries in unknown seas, and only grieved that he could not be just such another fighting captain! Those days

> "When Drake went down to the Horn
> And England was crowned thereby!"

He liked to think of Dorothy in the familiar rooms, looked after by Mrs. Amyas, and petted by stately Millicent, who was not likely to remain a spinster herself for many years; besides which, he did not like the life in the curate's house for her, where every one ran wild because there was neither time nor money to attend to home-wants, and only Nell's strength of character and personality kept things together. Bertie Culverton had fulfilled the foreshadowing of his boyhood; he was about the same age as Jack, D'Arcy's step-brother, now walking the London hospitals, but he was developing into a type of tavern-haunting young men who formed low associates, and followed town vices to the best of his

limited opportunities in the country. D'Arcy had seen him lounging about the inns at Trawles in company with the sons of small shopkeepers, and shrank with disgust to think of Dorothy coming in contact with such as these.

He never shrank to think of her contact with a Mate on board a wind-jammer who had touched the pitch of moral things as well as physical, and become defiled with them. But in those days he was better, as well as worse, than he knew.

His last sailing voyage extended over the space of nine months, and he left his ship and proceeded to London wondering, with a faint pang, if he should ever berth in a sailing ship again. Probably not—he meant to go up in his profession, and up meant steam, though he were put back to a less responsible post on a smaller vessel. Yet his mind clung round the thought of the great scornful sails, and all the romance of such voyages woke and blotted out the darker side. The homeward journey had been pleasant too; for the first time in his experience D'Arcy had shipped in a passenger ship and had learned what it was to have some one to speak to beyond those with whom he worked the ship. It gave him a foretaste of a Liner's possibilities,—though the passengers had been few, and even those might be counted as second-class—and went far to reconcile him to the change probably awaiting him.

The certificate for Master-extra was less hard to obtain than he had imagined. He was secretly nervous at facing the examiners, and loathed the moment when some grey-headed, keen-eyed old gentleman asked him for a verbal proof of his own

knowledge. Had he liked his work less thoroughly, and been in consequence less conversant with it, it is probable that he would have failed in spite of his coach. As it was, he passed, though without much *éclat*, and went out from the ordeal feeling as if he wanted a drink very badly. He stayed in town a day or so longer, to report himself at Savernakes'—or rather to keep his existence before the mind of the firm. As he left the Company's great offices after his last call there he had an encounter. A keen-faced upright gentleman passed him without glancing in his direction, but D'Arcy recognized Mr. Bernard Savernake, hardly altered for all the years that had passed since that last time when he had seen him . . . the old pang of that disturbing occasion shot across his heart with the memory of his fear. The youngest member of the firm passed without a pause; it is probable that he really could not recognize the bare-footed boy whom he had tried to save from what he thought an unsuitable life, in the slight bronzed young man with a small fair moustache shading his upper lip in proof of his manhood. D'Arcy went out into Aldgate feeling as though it were a day of incidents.

That very morning he had learned, to his satisfaction, that Savernake, Cross, and Savernake were graciously pleased to have found him a berth on the *Queen*, the largest of their passenger ships. From Mate to fourth Officer was a drop back in dignity, but a real advance in fortune; for though it was unlikely that he would be moved up on such a boat as the *Queen*, and would probably get his promotion on a cargo carrier,, still it was a step in the right

direction. He had got his foot on the lowest rung of the ladder now that led to his being Captain Amyas as he had promised himself.

He went down to Devonshire at once without saying he was coming, but they knew he was in England and would expect him any day. He had not only his new appointment to announce to them, but he intended giving some hint of his intentions with regard to Dorothy Culverton instead of springing the whole thing upon them when he had coaxed Dorothy out of her shyness into a definite answer and it was all cut and dried. D'Arcy leaned back in the carriage as the express bore him out of town, and his thoughts were pleasant ones while he looked out of the window at the increasingly familiar aspect of the country. In London he had merely known that it was November in a superficial sense; here, in the country, that fact impressed itself upon him, with the growing ascendency of Nature over his mind as it had been when he was a boy. The glaring, dripping woodlands peeled off on either hand as the train licked up the miles, rocking down south. And yet it was not fast enough for his impatience.

Dorothy lay at the end of that journey, Dorothy and Trawles. As he stepped out on the familiar little platform he looked round him hungrily for a familiar face, but the place was dreary and deserted, and the rain splashed on to the roof with a sound that would have depressed him at another time. The new and very young porter was a stranger to him and as he walked through Trawles the dull, dreary afternoon seemed to have driven every one indoors. Not even the gorgeous autumn tints dressing the

hill-sides above the town could make the prospect anything but sad and wintry. D'Arcy was used to Devon weather, and took little notice of the rain; he walked home through the puddles, for there is no row of dilapidated flies at Trawles as there is at other seaside places, and rang at his own door with a sudden feeling of strangeness upon him. It almost seemed as though he were a guest. The country girl who opened the door stared at him in stolid surprise. She, like the porter, was a stranger, and the tall brown-faced man whose blue serge suit was damp with rain did not convey anything but a visitor to her mind. She tried to show him into the parlour,—that large fireless front room that was never dignified by the name of drawing-room,—but he laughed and put her aside.

"All right, my girl. I'm at home here. I'll go into the dinin'-room."

He left her staring helplessly, and opened the door of the room where the family usually sat. His step-mother and Milly were there as he had expected, both at work, Mrs. Amyas with a basket and a pile of clothes to be mended, Millicent cutting out red flannel on the long table, probably to fashion into garments for the Dorcas Society. Millicent was of more practical use in the parish than the curate's own daughters had been. She dropped the scissors as Amyas entered, and gave a cry.

"D'Arcy! we didn't know you were comin'. Did you write?"

"No—thought I'd surprise you. I've good news—just got my appointment as fourth Mate on the *Queen*, our swagger ship."

"I'm very glad, dear. Sit down and tell us all about it." Mrs. Amyas cleared a pile of things off a chair, and made him sit down. She spoke tremulously, for all her honest pleasure in him and his success, and glancing at Millicent, D'Arcy saw that she had been crying. Her eyes were still moist, and the lids red.

"Whew! rain inside as well as out!" he said. "What's the matter?"

"Oh, we have heard very bad news—local news," Mrs. Amyas said hastily. "It is a shame to spoil your home-coming with such a depressing story. Never mind—tell us about yourself, D'Arcy."

"There's nothing to tell. I'm off again in a fortnight, that's all. Short passage this time—we shall be home again in ten weeks. What's the news? You'd better tell me—I shall be fancyin' all sorts of things. Who's dead?"

The two women looked at each other in silence.

"It's the Culvertons!" Milly burst out, her face flooded with sudden red. "It's not death—it's worse than death."

D'Arcy laid his hand on the table and clutched it roughly. The veins round his eyes swelled, and his lips were twisted as if with pain.

"Go on!" he said hoarsely.

"It's Dorothy—little Dolly that we all played with! And you always liked her, D'Arcy. She has got into trouble—with that brute—that beast——"

"Milly! Milly!" said Mrs. Amyas, shocked at the wrathful force of the girl's words. "It's the vicar!" she explained with a lowered voice, looking round her half nervously. "She confessed it at last, when—when it was growing too late to hide it all. He was down

here in the spring, and he met the poor child running wild about the place, as she and Nell have always done, and he got hold of her and deceived her.... Oh, it is a shameful story!"

Neither of the women, in their absorption in the subject, noticed the silence of their listener. Millicent took up the tale.

"Mr. Culverton is broken-hearted, and Nell—I am afraid to look at Nell! She has arranged everything. They are sendin' Dolly away till—till it's all over, and they hope he will marry her. The scandal has reached the Bishop at last, and they say Mr. Dalkeith will put things right as far as they can be mended—but he's a bad man, and how is she ever to live down the shame?"

D'Arcy gave a sudden loud rough laugh, and rose. "I'm goin' out," he said, and that was all, but they drew back from him afraid, and listened to hear him stumbling about the hall as if he were drunk. Then the door banged, and he was gone.

He went out into the dripping evening and then stood and hesitated, as if he were in a strange place and could not find his way. Across the road was the familiar little beach that he had known from childhood, and Jasper's cottage, the rain beating on its zinc roof. A new generation of children swarmed round Jasper as he mended his nets now-a-days, but the old aspects were the same. D'Arcy walked aimlessly to the sea-wall and looked over at the coarse yellow froth round the Dog Rock. Then he turned and began ascending the red cliff-side, up and up steadily in the teeth of the west wind which was full of rain, as though unconscious of his own discomfort.

When he got to the top he looked back at the grey sea melting into the grey sky, the streak of grey steel meeting it which was the little river running through Trawles, and the flaunting shivering trees on the hillsides. It was a forlorn prospect; the whole world seemed suddenly bereft of God.

D'Arcy's religion had been at best but a superstitious belief perhaps; but he had cherished some sort of a fancy that there was a stronger power than man's, and possibly another world where things would be better than they were in this. It seemed to go out of his heart all at once like a light suddenly quenched. Old blasphemies heard in the foc's'le, when all hands gathered together after the horrible scanty meal of pea-soup and duff, and the evening watch had no sails to attend to, returned on his mind with a hideous significance. He had not thought much about them at the time, for boy as he had been then he had laughed in empty-headed fashion, and fancied that he was equally knowing as the men. But now his apprenticeship rose so vividly on his plastic mind, as if the imprint had lain there deeply embedded, that he could hear the men's very voices as they smoked and rolled oaths between their lips, and see the brown, weather-beaten faces—such steady faces, compelling admiration though aged by such narrow lives and cruel hardships.

These men had been right—there was no God, save to laugh at. He made an excellent theme for coarse jokes, and lampoons too free even for the cuddy, for after he became Mate he had heard less of them. There was no power ruling the world save the power of men's lust, and he whose passions were

strongest was master. No God,—no Devil,—only men, and women to ravage! He stumbled on up the slippery red cliff, and crossed the ridge and plunged into a plantation on the other side. It led down into the road which ran from Exeter into Trawles again; he was making a circuit, and in a minute would reach the very corner called the Cross-roads, where Dorothy had been knocked down by her betrayer some twelve years ago. The child's sobbing, frightened cry came back to him with piteous meaning.

"I wish he hadn't kissed me!—I wish—I wish he hadn't kissed me!"

He felt as if he must put his hands over his ears to shut it out; but as he pushed his way blindly through the plantation his attention was suddenly distracted by a little wild figure kneeling amongst the roots of a great beech, and dashing itself to and fro against the trunk in a strange passion of rage or grief or pain. He almost stumbled over it, before he saw the unearthly thing to be a tiny woman's figure wrapped in an old brown cloak, the hood of which was pulled half over her face.

"Nell!" he said hoarsely. "Why, Nell!"

She ceased rocking herself, and looked up at him from her crouching position at his feet. They stared into each other's faces through the dreary dusk.

"I did not recognize you," she said at last in a whisper, unconscious of the reason. His face had altered; it seemed to have grown wicked all at once, and full of stealthy passions.

"I'm D'Arcy Amyas," he said rapidly. "I'm your old playmate—*her* playmate!—don't you remember?

We stood at the Cross-roads down there, and he knocked her down. . . ."

The girl drew her small fine lips back from her teeth and made a horrible gnashing noise. Her brown eyes were no longer soft, they were full of hard light. "Damn him!" she said fiercely, her light body beginning to rock again, as if without her will. "I've seen her tortured—I've seen her bearing it, and frightened, and going through hell day after day—week after week. . . . I wish we had pulled him down then, that day, when we were children, and tried our puny strength until we choked him! I would like to make him suffer as she has—I would like to make him go all through it, and worse! I would like——"

He interrupted with stiff lips. "Did she—cry much?" Some recollection of her as a yellow-haired child, when he had a secret feeling that he could not bear her to shed tears, was back upon him now.

"You don't know!" All the force of a minute since went out of her figure. She shuddered closer to the tree. "You're a man—you don't know what girls have to bear! You'll never know. I felt it was killing her, and I had to stand by and see it all. Sometimes I thought *I* would kill her, and end it so."

"She has gone away, hasn't she?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you go too?"

"I stayed to face it out for her here. It makes it easier afterwards. They think he will marry her!—*he!* I must bear that too. It's the best thing to hope, and that proves that we are *all* in hell, and there is no way out."

He looked at her, wondering blankly at the force of the nature cooped up in her small frame. She rose to her feet suddenly, drawing her cloak round her, her white face turned steadily to rain-sodden Trawles in the valley at their feet.

"We can't kill him," she said. "We must try and propitiate him if anything, because that is the best chance for her. Oh, that is what is worst to me! I can never, never take him by the throat and choke his great life out with my bare hands! All my life I must go on smiling at them both; but perhaps when we are all dead I shall come face to face with him with *nothing* between us to hinder me."

She held out her hand. It was cold and wet with rain, or her own bitter crying. He took it in his own a minute, simply, and let it go again.

"Good-bye, D'Arcy!" she said, turning to leave him. "I suppose you are going right out, all round the world. Well, it's a bad world, and you'll find it all the same wherever you go. I know you will, though I never get beyond this corner of it in Trawles. And you won't care at last, and I shan't either. It's all the same, here or anywhere."

She ran away into the shadows, a light fluttering figure, leaving the echo of her words in the wide godless world of which Trawles was a corner.

* * * * *

As he came down into the town a piano organ outside one of the badly-lighted shops struck up a cracked waltz-tune. An organ was rare in Trawles, but this one had reached even its far-off neighbourhood, and played old tunes in a slipshod fashion, for it was by no means a new instrument. There was no

one but D'Arcy to listen in such weather ; he had the full benefit of it as he slung past in the wet. It was a once popular song that every one knows—

"The sailor's wife the sailor's star shall be—
Yeo ho! we go
Across the sea ;
The sailor's wife the sailor's star shall be——"

D'Arcy paused and listened for a second, the corners of his mouth drawn up into a hideous smile.

CHAPTER VI

"Men tell me of truth now—'False!' I cry.
Of beauty—'A mask, friend! Look beneath.'
We take our own method, the Devil and I,
With 'pleasant' and 'fair,' and 'wise' and 'rare,'
And the best we wish to what lives, is—death!
Which even in wishing perhaps we lie."

ROBERT BROWNING.

THERE is a hotel at Southampton called Kelway's, where steamship Officers used to foregather muchly, and seafarers of all grades seemed to be instinctively attracted as long as their purse allowed them, some years ago. Not that the place was immoderate, but that any one under the rank of a senior Officer seldom has money to spend on hotels between trips, unless he be one of the few Merchantmen favoured by Providence with private means—in which case he would probably go to the Sou'-Western.

D'Arcy Amyas passed the fortnight before starting in his new berth on a steamer, at Kelway's, the while he spent money recklessly about the town, and turned his experiences abroad to account in "seeing life" at home. There is much to be done at Southampton for the Merchantman—probably even more than in London, because he is on his own ground and almost inevitably bound to know something of the seaport. Southampton is to the Mercantile Marine very much what Portsmouth, or Plymouth,

is to the Navy. After a week D'Arcy's sunburn had faded a little, and he had contrived to look white and drawn about the face, with that horrible unwholesome look which indulgence can give. He did not spend all his money at once, because he meant it to last him till the ship sailed at least, and he went about his dissipation with the cold-blooded intensity he had but just developed. His head spun, and good food tasted worse than the old duff and yellow peas of his sailing days, but he plunged a thought deeper, and did his best to bring his body to the level where he felt his soul to be.

He came into the smoking-room of the hotel one evening, and found it deserted save for a single occupant. Kelway's hummed in the mornings about eleven o'clock; but at this hour the queer little room under the skylight looked almost forlorn. D'Arcy glanced at the one other person present; he was an elderly man, hale and bluff, with a twinkle in his deep eyes, and a twang of the salt about him somehow. The younger man remembered seeing him night after night in company with two men whose boats he knew had left that very day—Liner Captains both of them, and big men at that. Evidently the solitary smoker must be a person of importance in that little world which is bounded by blue water and holds the feeding of the population of Britain in the hollow of its hand.

D'Arcy crossed to the fire-place, struck a match, and attempted to light a pipe. It went out, and he suppressed a half-uttered oath. The old man looked up, and smiled grimly.

"H'm! the sooner your ship sails the better for you, I think!" he said dryly.

"What do you mean?" Amyas asked, turning round fiercely.

"What I say. Look at your hand! It's shaking so that the match goes out every time. There! I told you so!"

D'Arcy threw the useless vesta into the grate, and dropped into a chair. He got the pipe alight at last, and turned his bloodshot eyes on the old man with a scowl.

"Been at it pretty hard?" said that worthy coolly. "Lord! can't I remember the same sort of burst when I was your age! Don't spoil your health though. You won't enjoy it any more if you do, and there's a lot of enjoyment at sea."

The anger went out of D'Arcy at the genuinely kindly tone. He was at all times quick to feel, and emotional, under a rather hard exterior. He was not drunk at the moment either, as it chanced, though he had been so off and on for days, and as the liquor died out of him it was succeeded by a reaction of fear and loneliness. He dropped his head on his hand, and spoke as he felt.

"Think so? Can't say I've found it. It's a hell of a life!"

"Don't be a fool!" said the other good-naturedly. "You're down from the drink. Have a moderate B. and S. and you'll steady your nerves again. Just off a wind-jammer, aren't you?"

"Yes. Goin' into steam this trip."

"I wish I were you! First trip on a Liner! Gad! it makes my blood dance. I was on the Indian Line

for eighteen years, and then like a fool I left it. I'm too old to go back now, but I'd like to take my old tub out once more."

D'Arcy looked up with a new interest. He was very sorry and sick, and he began to be tired of the level of life on which he had been living since he left Trawles. He had not nearly done with vice, but he would have liked a more refined flavour about it, as a vitiated palate longs for less simple fare. Much could be done in Simnal Street and the Ditches in those days, but it was an elementary life, and the most rudimentary of educations unfits a man for the real appreciation of those classical quarters. Besides, he had heard of the results on other men . . . and he was sometimes afraid.

"What's the great advantage in a Liner?" he said. "A decent cargo carrier is as good, it seems to me. Sailin' ships are rough all the world over, but a big tramp means food you can eat, and good housin'. After all, you won't get more in a mail boat—or less work." He took the tumbler the waiter silently brought him. It had been ordered and paid for by his new friend, who watched him drink with cheery patronage. The lines round D'Arcy's lips relaxed, and his eyes cleared. He sat quiet and listened to the reply to his question.

"Women!" said the old Captain, laughing; "and cards and drink if you want them—can't say I did. They are not my weakness. But society I hold that a man *does* want, and that he gets, otherwise he runs amuck when he gets ashore, just because he's been cut off his natural heritage on the water." The blue eyes danced wickedly, and he chuckled at his

own phrasing of what he considered an amiable weakness. "You've just been out of sight of a petticoat for six months and more at a time on a sailing ship, haven't you?"

"We had passengers last trip."

"Ah! possible?"

"No—nothin' to boast of. They made a change though. We signed them on as cook's mate and stewardesses, and they shifted for themselves all right. There was one old girl who used to cook in her washin'-basin over a lamp contrivance she had. We winked at it because she made the food eatable where our 'Doctor' spoiled it. I've gone down and helped her many a time, partly for company."

"Yes, you get pretty sick of the Skipper, and the Mate, and the starboard watch, don't you, by the time you come into port? And the food, even in the cabin of a well-found ship, is monotonous. You'll see if you don't find life more worth living this trip. What's your berth?"

"Fourth Mate. I've been Mate."

"Yes, I know—you must go back in order to go forward! Fourth Mate! You will have a time, if you want to, and your Skipper has any bowels of compassion. You are the man who *ought* to look after the passengers—there is no choice about it—you and the Chief Officer. You've got a broken night—four to eight's the watch—but it's worth it, my boy—it's worth it!" He took a long pull at his own grog, and his eyes twinkled more than ever. "Now look here, I'm Captain Ronny of the old *Vega*, Indian and European Line, and I can give you tips though I'm good for nothing else now. Stick to the married

women, my boy—for a time at least. They'll educate you. They are not dangerous to bachelors, and they'll give you all you want! You can't afford to marry, but can afford to enjoy yourself."

"They've got husbands—sometimes!"

"What is a husband to a clever woman? Just the gear she wants to work with! He's the standing rigging, that's his business. Don't get yourself mixed up with a fool, of course. Choose a clever woman—she'll never let the chart out of her own hands!"

D'Arcy listened and pondered, and the old reprobate talked on, telling sea-tales that became more sulphurous as time went on. D'Arcy forgot to go out as usual; the smoking-room remained their own, and they drew their chairs nearer together and discussed a new heaven and a new earth, where laws were not, and D'Arcy's new belief became conviction. He took a fancy to Captain Ronny, and that gentleman returning it in kind, they spent the remainder of D'Arcy's leave together "seeing life" in a less lurid fashion, but no less decidedly than the younger man had done by himself. It was due to this intimacy that D'Arcy was saved going to his new work half unfit through dissipation and with quite empty pockets, for the late Captain of the *Vega* had come into money and was a fairly wealthy man. He was taking a house at Southampton for old associations' sake, and had got put up at Kelway's during the legal business connected with it, when he first encountered Amyas. He stood by D'Arcy to the last, and went on board with him—to see the ship, he said, but really to see if he knew her Captain. Finding that he did, and knowing that he was a person of

importance in his way, he good-naturedly gave it to be understood that he was a friend of young Amyas', who therefrom gained a reflection of the importance, and was approved of in his Captain's eyes. When Captain Ronny left the boat he put his hand on D'Arcy's shoulder and invited him to come and see him on his return.

"I'm taking a big house out at Portswood, and you must come and stay with us. You've not met my wife yet. She's a good little woman, but she has a sharp tongue." He sighed, looking perfectly cheerful all the while. "I married before I was Mate," he said, "and I was a darned fool to do it! Don't you marry, my boy; keep clear of a 'consort,' and let me know when you're ashore!"

Amyas was glad of the invitation, for it would save him going to Devonshire, and he was likely to be hard up on his return. He did not feel it much on board, because the other Officers had done like Captain Ronny and married early, which hampered their expenditure. What his mates could not, D'Arcy had less temptation to do, but he observed the economy necessary to support a wife and family, and Captain Ronny's advice soaked well into his mind.

It was a full boat, for the *Queen* was the favourite on the Line, and her Captain was Commodore. Savernake, Cross, and Savernake relied for profit nearly as much, by this time, on the passenger department as on cargo. Their sailing ships still went all round the world; their "tramp" steamers—immense cargo carriers these—mostly confined themselves to certain ports in Spain and the East and West Coasts of

Africa; but the bigger Liners coped with nearly all the increase of passengers to and from Johannesburg, running as they did direct to Port Elizabeth. The route lay from Southampton to the Cape Verde Islands, and then to Port Elizabeth, and it was a boast of the Company that, though under no contract to carry mails (that came later), they were as regular in their departure and arrivals as the mail boats, and spared neither coal nor seamanship to satisfy their patrons. For this reason, perhaps, they were vastly used by business men, to whom time meant money, and who, by travelling with Savernakes', could reach Durban in twenty-one days at the outside, and be in Johannesburg in another twenty-seven hours; but the voyage was even more one of pleasure than on the mail steamers. Relying as the Company did more and more on the passenger list, it behoved them to make the trip enjoyable, and their men were chosen for social gifts after the essential necessity of good seamanship. The Captain whose boat was popular had the best chance of promotion, which made the tone of the whole Line and those employed on it somewhat different from other companies. On leaving Durban the boats went to Madagascar, where the bulk of their cargo was discharged and retaken, the bigger boats being a week at Madagascar, after which they returned to Durban and followed the same route as coming out. The immensely heavy rates charged to passengers were lightly grumbled at by the class of people catered for. Poor men did not travel on Savernakes', and the wealthy secretly liked the idea that they could afford to pay for a certain exclusiveness.

D'Arcy found that on board such boats as the *Queen*, to be in Savernakes' passenger steamers was regarded as synonymous to the term "gentleman." No one could hope to climb to such a height, even though he might work his way to Master of one of their sailing ships, unless he were "all right" by birth and education. He probably owed his own good fortune as much to being the son of Alfred Amyas, R.N., and to Mr. Bernard Savernake's influence, as to his own hard work. It was somewhat of a blow to his pride, for he had thought that his prowess in his last voyage but one had been his recommendation. But he was rapidly learning cynicism. He shrugged his shoulders inwardly, and dropped the illusion that to be the best man in the ship from a sailor's point of view was sufficient qualification for any post. To be a perfect host was now the standard set up before his eyes day and night, and to gain such a reputation, at least, was to make yourself acceptable to the women. "Stick to the married women—they will educate you!" said Captain Ronny. "Let the women manage the men, and you manage the women!" said the authorities of the boat deck. D'Arcy pondered. It seemed to him to point all one way, "takin' it by and large," as he would himself have expressed it.

There was on board, that trip, a certain Lady Arthur Hyde, wife of one of the Directors of the Company, and in consequence a person of importance, who had her deck cabin and sat on the Captain's right hand at meals, and was treated deferentially. She belonged to that class of women who never look old, and so it was impossible to guess her age. But

she was probably not very old in those days, though considerably older than D'Arcy Amyas. He did not observe her greatly at first, save as a pretty woman with a clear-featured face and rich dark hair. His business was with the less-important passengers, and he was moody and distrait for the first three days of the passage out. He noticed, however, that Lady Arthur quietly quelled any demonstration which might be made in her honour, and also that she was a good sailor, for both which things he respected her. The boat was still in the Bay, labouring against a choppy sea, when one day it happened that D'Arcy, off duty for the moment, strolled down the deck and leaned on the railing overlooking the second-class, meditating. There was a frown on his fair face, and his cap was pushed sullenly over his eyes, for the spectre of Trawles would not be quite laid do what he might, and occasionally it rose up before him still. As he leant there a lady's head appeared on the stair, coming up from the lower deck. The boat was rolling, and she seemed to have some difficulty in keeping her feet, for she clung to the rail, panting and laughing. The Officer sprang to the rescue, and as he took her hand to help her on deck he saw that it was Lady Arthur. Her brilliant amused face fronted him, not half a yard away, as she recovered her balance.

"Thank you! What dreadful things ships' ladders are! You ought to have a sentry always posted at the bottom to help poor women up."

"I'm afraid it is rather a tryin' time for ladies until we are out of the Bay," he said, smiling. His lips relaxed and his eyes narrowed at the corners

Lady Arthur looked at him, and leaned carelessly on the railing also, as though to get her breath. "You are such a good sailor that you should not mind," he added.

"I wish I could say as much for my maid. I have just been into the second-class to look after her, instead of her looking after me. Poor girl! she is very ill."

"We shall be in calmer waters to-morrow. But you know this route as well or better than I."

"Yes; I have travelled this way several times. I feel bound to, you know, to show my confidence in the Line!" She laughed, and showed that she had perfect teeth. "Are you a new-comer, Mr.—er——"

"My name is D'Arcy Amyas. I am fourth Officer, and this is my first voyage on a Liner."

"And before that?"

"I was Mate of a sailin' ship."

"I know what that means—far more grave responsibility than your present position. I went for a voyage in a sailing ship once, for my health. What is it you call them? Wind-jammers?" Her pretty mouth played with the word daintily. "Do you like this better, Mr. Amyas?"

"It is a step in the right direction, it means promotion. Otherwise I miss the responsibility, as you call it. I am almost sorry that my sailin' days are over."

"That is a poor compliment to us—the passengers, I mean!"

"I did not know that I might pay you compliments," he said, his voice softened a little.

She laughed again, and looked at him. If there

was not encouragement in her glance he might be excused for mistaking it.

"If you would give me a chance——" he began. The flattening of the vowels was very apparent in his speech to her unaccustomed ears. It was too natural to him to be affected, but it made every one else's pronunciation broad—they sounded as if they were saying "charnce" and "thourght," however pure their English, from simple contrast.

"Are you a Somerset man?" she asked briefly.

"No; Devon."

"I thought so." Her smile was half tender as she turned to him with some speculation in her face. "I think we are going to be friends," she said. D'Arcy's eyes answered for him. There was no law against his looking compliments. "Tell me your watches—stay, I know them. Four to eight, is it not?"

"Yes; but the watches are doubled to Madeira, you know."

"Yes. Four to eight." She seemed to meditate. "And then you go your rounds?"

"Yes."

"Don't frighten me by waking me up, whatever you do! It is so very alarming to have one's sleep broken into by an Officer looking in to see if one has put out the light, or shut the porthole, or something."

"Tell me your cabin number then, that I may remember it."

Their eyes met steadily for an instant. "Twenty—on the starboard side. I have a deck cabin," she said quietly.

The dressing bugle sounded faintly, from the bowels of the ship as it seemed. She turned to go, and he held out his hand to assist her. The ship was rolling heavily, and the deck empty save for themselves. As she put her hand in his she laughed again, and he caught a gleam of her eyes, brilliant below her lashes. Then the ship was caught by a heavy sea, and dipped almost to the water-line—he seized the rail with one hand, and felt her flung against his breast, his right arm closing round her and her scented hair against his face.

"Please forgive me," he said, and his eyes blazed with nothing like penitence. "I was obliged to steady you."

"Could we either of us help it?" said Lady Arthur.

* * * * *

"You're going straight for success!" said Ransom, the Navigating Officer, a week later; and he spoke sardonically.

D'Arcy looked up sharply. He had just come on to the bridge at a run to relieve his senior; it was eight bells, and the first of the dog watches. Most of the passengers were dozing in deck-chairs, but he had paused at the foot of the ladder for a last word, and he wondered if Ransom knew with whom.

"I say," said the second Officer, as he turned to go and leave Amyas in charge of the great boat and a thousand lives or so, "what time do you get to bed, Amyas?"

"The usual time, I suppose."

"Call twelve o'clock the usual time for fourth Officer? I heard you come up last night, and you

had to turn out again at four! You only get a few hours' sleep that way. Well, it's your affair. I suppose you think it's worth it."

D'Arcy did not answer. He took up the glass and scanned the horizon, wondering if Ransom knew anything to matter. . . . He was playing a dangerous game, but he had a clever woman to back him. If Captain Harrington would only choose to remain blind, things were easy enough; the Chief Officer was not a man who would interfere. But there were limits to official endurance, as D'Arcy knew, and if he had been seen coming out of a deck cabin at midnight——

He frowned, and leaned his shoulder against the support of the flying-bridge which stretched over his head. In spite of the fact that he had slept most of the morning, missing his breakfast, he was very tired. There was nothing to look at in the smooth blue sea of the tropics, and he pulled his cap over his eyes to shut out the glare, and dozed, standing upright with folded arms. It was an old trick learned in his latter sailing days, but not often practised by him then, for he had been too anxious.

He got his relief at eight o'clock, and went off to the Officers' Mess, hungry and tired. The physical satisfaction of throwing himself down to the little table, and facing the tempting dishes the steward brought, was infinite. Rather different living this to that of a sailing ship, as Captain Ronny had remarked! He smiled a little, and made his choice between half-a-dozen different dishes.

Later on he went on deck, and stood about chatting with different groups, but he did not go direct to

Lady Arthur Hyde. She had taught him to reach his goal by circuitous routes among other things. When at last he sank into a chair by her side it was past ten, and several of the passengers were making a move.

"Well, D'Arcy?" said the woman. There was no one near them.

"I thought I was never goin' to get a word with you!"

"You've had plenty at various times, haven't you? Too many for us both, perhaps." She sighed and laughed in her usual fashion. "I wonder why I've given you so much, D'Arcy!"

"You've been an angel!"

"Oh, I know. You could hardly say less—considering! I have been . . . something, I admit. But I fell in love with you the first day I saw you, scowling absently at the Captain's back—*I* was talking to the Captain, and could see you over his shoulder! I asked who you were, and knew your name and position quite well by the time you told me them the day before we reached Madeira. Now don't get vain—it is no merit of yours, I am sure, sulky, blue-eyed boy that you looked! Only—I liked you!" Her very voice was a caress.

D'Arcy was neither so fluent nor subtle as she; he found a difficulty in expressing himself on the same lines, at this point in his career, and was conscious that his words halted when he spoke, after the exquisite grace of her manner.

"I shall never forget the first kiss you gave me!" was what he actually said, which remark was so trite that it had at least the advantage of never having been made to Lady Arthur before.

"You dreadful boy! how outspoken you are," she said, half laughing and half sighing. "I surely did not 'give'—which is as much as to say I offered it! As far as I remember you began to implore, and then helped yourself without waiting for an answer!"

"Well, anyhow there was no harm in that—was there?" he said. It was his turn to laugh.

"No harm?" Her tone was reminiscent.

"Not in itself."

"Kissing may become very complicated!" breathed Lady Arthur.

"Are you blamin' me?"

"Perhaps I am blaming myself!"

D'Arcy tacked. "After all, when a woman has given her lips she has given everything," he said. "The rest is only a detail."

"Have you found it so? No, I beg your pardon—I should not have said that!" she added quickly, meeting his eyes for an instant. "D'Arcy, when you look like that you might be a poet or a painter, or something else uncomfortably artistic. Why didn't they make you an artist? You sketch beautifully."

"I had an awful fright as a little chap once over that. An old friend of my father's advised him to have me taught paintin', and I was bent on goin' to sea. By Jove! I can remember the feelin' of impotent rage now! I wouldn't touch a pencil for months."

"Silly boy! And it is just that which—— I wonder if I dare tell you a secret?"

"Try."

"It is just that odd artistic strain in you that will make all your successes—of a kind. It will always

win you your way with women. Do you think, if you had been quite an ordinary young man in uniform, that I should have—should have gone any further, after tumbling into your arms that day? Of course not. But I talked to you, and found that, sailor as you are, you look at things from a standpoint of some creature whose soul you seem to have stolen. You are a literary man rather than a merchantman—in spite of yourself."

He tried not to look flattered, and in a curious way really did deprecate her words.

"I'm a sailor all through, I'm afraid—very ordinary clay. I roughed it for five years."

"Did you like the roughing it, my Sybarite?"

"I didn't mind. I loved my profession, and every detail of it interested me."

"The enthusiasm of the artist, my dear D'Arcy. You can't get away from it. And yet how young you still are to talk as you do! That was one of your chief charms to me. You looked so young I thought I might have the honour and glory of being your first love. Was I right?"

. . . A dripping, wailing wood, a wet wind whirling the few fluttering leaves off the trees, a girl who rocked herself and moaned and called down curses. And the *cause* of all this! He took the memory by the throat, and looking with steady eyes at Lady Arthur, lied royally.

"If you care to know it, you are the first woman I have ever cared for!"

Her eyes drooped as if she found his too passionate. And yet as a rule D'Arcy could not look any one between the eyes for long, to conquer their glance with

his—not because his own were shifty, but because he possessed some sense belonging to the medium, and was easily magnetized and overawed by personality and a more coarsely vital power. It was purely a question of nerves, but it needed a great spur to work him up into passion before he could dominate a less overstrung nature.

"There is Captain Harrington coming to speak to me," said Lady Arthur hurriedly. "Don't let him find you with me. Go!—good-night. I am going to bed early."

* * * * *

Lady Arthur went to Durban with the boat, spent the time there while they took in cargo at Madagascar, and went home with them. Captain Harrington held his tongue, and D'Arcy contrived to do his work and to keep on the thin edge of safety. He would have liked to have stood well with his Skipper, and had an uneasy feeling that he did not. But he risked his big stake, and had his education by a married woman well begun by the time they reached Southampton again.

"Good-bye, D'Arcy!" Lady Arthur said when they parted. "Don't quite forget me. I have been the first woman in your life, but I shall not be the last!"

She had not been quite the first, but in the second half of her impression he concurred.

CHAPTER VII

"He that buys land, buys stones—
He that buys flesh, buys bones!"—etc.

(Inscription on a piece of Devon pottery in the coffee-room at Kelway's.)

IT was a rule on Savernakes' line that promotion should be worked through the cargo boats, so that a young Officer who started as D'Arcy did—fourth Mate on such a boat as the *Queen*, which was some 12,000 tons—became third Mate of one of the cargo boats, then was, possibly, second of a smaller passenger Liner, and was handed backwards and forwards from cargo to passenger boats until he became Master. This generally took place first of a carrier, then of a boat such as the *Signora*, which, though only 4,600 tons, carried passengers, and from thence he might pass upwards to Commodore-Captain in command of the biggest of the fleet. By this means the men learned coasting and to work cargo, and as Savernakes' preferred to train their Officers and keep them in the service of the Company, from Apprentice to Commodore, it was rarely that any man in their employ left them. From first to last his education was ready for him amongst his Company's own property; there was no branch of seamanship that he could not learn amongst those great boats which were called by women's titles, from crossing the yard

in the old *Mistress*, to bringing the *Queen* safely up to Durban Bar, the which she was of course too huge to cross.

D'Arcy Amyas' career had not, up to his first steam voyage, been anything uncommon. He had done three years' apprenticeship instead of four, being a *Worcester* boy, but he had risen step by step, and that not rapidly, from third Mate to Mate on a sailing ship, and then had gone back to fourth Mate for the privilege of undertaking far less onerous duties and hard work on a great Liner. But from that time his rise was somewhat phenomenal, and became a by-word in the Service. The secret was an open one, of course, for the story of D'Arcy's "friend at court" flew. He was envied and spitefully spoken of, but he found that to meet questions with closed lips, rumours with closed ears, and to thank chance for a clever woman's favour, were likely to overcome all obstacles and bring him speedily to his goal.

How it was managed no man could ever tell—certainly not the Directors of Savernakes', who, after all, must have been the strings pulled by an unseen hand; but D'Arcy was speedily promoted to third Officer of the *Madam*, a cargo carrier tramping out to Walfisch Bay and even up to Zanzibar; and a very long voyage he found it with the various ports of call, and the shifting of cargo, while the winches groaned under the Kaffirs' lazy manipulation, and he stood at his hatch, tallying hour after hour under a burning sun, until the blistered decks danced before his eyes. Only three Officers were carried on cargo boats, and after his brief glimpse of society on the *Queen*, D'Arcy found it infinitely dull. Between

ports there was little or nothing to do, when it was another fellow's watch, so the two men off duty idled the long hot hours away, and longed for port, where there was sometimes a chance of getting into mischief.

On his second trip in the *Madam* Amyas fell in with a man who was a great piquet player, and being second Mate, they used to retire to his cabin during the dog watches and gamble for lack of other excitement. The long sunny decks stretched away on either hand, and the wind sang in the rigging, and the boat pushed steadily through the green water, while the two men would sit engrossed over tiny slips of pasteboard, making quaint combinations of them whereby to seriously embarrass each other's future for the next few months if possible.

The second Mate was a very much better player than D'Arcy, but losing will teach a man much. D'Arcy lost, and this also was a part of his education. The other man was known as "Piquet" Davis throughout the Service, and carte blanche was his winning hand. This rarest of chances seemed to come to him by some fatality at least once during play, and the consequences were ruinous to his adversary, who, hot with thirty in hand, saw ripique and pique coolly nullified by those twelve unpictured cards. He would start with carte blanche, including a tierce minor, and at least one three; quatorze in tens would follow as surely as he discarded, and his adversary, whether elder or younger hand, very seldom chanced to annul with superior cards. At the end of one long afternoon's play the third Officer found himself ten pounds to the bad, and realized that what with past losings and to-day's ill-luck he was in deep water.

"You've about cleaned me out!" he said, throwing the cards on to the improvised table and slipping his hand uneasily into his empty pockets.

"Sorry, old man! Jove! but that was a run of luck though! I never saw the cards fall so. Look here!" He picked up his favourites with the instinct of the true gambler who loves to reconsider the ways of chance however they fall. "I started with a quart and three aces, and I discarded a queen and four small 'uns. Then I took in a fourth ace and got a quint major, while you only had a minor. I thought you'd got the point anyhow, and though I might have cards I never looked for capot."

D'Arcy turned out of the cabin with a sick certainty that his own luck would force him to do what he had avoided so far—write home for money. He knew what that would mean, the retrenchment on an already slender income, and the harass and worry for his step-mother and sister. He was ashamed of his own carelessness and self-indulgence. But what was a man to do? The enforced monotony and inactivity were answerable for it, not he. Yet it seemed to him for one horror-struck moment that he was always sinking a little lower than the standard which his father, for instance, would have set. It was very seldom that he looked at his life from an outsider's point of view—as a rule he was content to live it; but that night as he walked up and down the bridge, under the vast spaces of the star-strewn sky, he analyzed himself somewhat curiously, and winced when he came to this last indiscretion. He knew just where Milly and Mrs. Amyas would contrive and pinch in order to let him have what help he demanded,

and tortured himself with seeing it all in fancy as plainly as though it had absolutely been described to him. He heard not one word of reproach or discontent from his womenkind, of course; they merely wrote asking anxiously when he was coming to Trawles; but he preferred to spend his short time when on shore at Captain Ronny's, and pleaded the R.N.R. drill as a preventative to his going to Devonshire, for he had joined the Reserve for the sake of the retaining fee and being paid for drill.

After a time the keen edge of his remorse wore off, but he learned to play piquet with discretion, and lent a hand towards landing younger men in the same predicament as he had been himself. He was known throughout his career as an excellent hand at cards, and it probably made a factor in his popularity.

By the time he had risen again to be second Mate—second Officer he called himself now—he had a loss for which he sincerely grieved, though as usual in the innermost fibres of his being. His step-mother died while he was on the other side of the world, and he learned it, on coming back to England, with a pang of remorse to think how often she had asked when he was coming down to see them again, and how he had always pushed the half-hesitating appeal on one side. D'Arcy had loved the practical, unimaginative woman who had reared him, and she had been a restraining influence in his life to an extent that she would hardly have credited herself. There were many things that he had hesitated to do because of some downright honest precept of Mrs. Amyas' ringing in his mind from childish days. He had probably gone his own way and done the things she would have censured,

eventually, being released from her influence by those thousands of miles of sea over which he had travelled away from her; but to D'Arcy to hesitate was still a sign of grace in his nature. After Mrs. Amyas' death he did not even do as much as that, nor was his hand stayed for any consideration but himself.

Her death forced him to go to Trawles at last, and settle up affairs with Millicent. His visit happened in the summer, and he thought of the last occasion when he went down, and of the dripping November woods and the rain-lashed coast. Trawles was gay with flowers this time, and the brawling river reflected blue sky and sunshine. There was a change in D'Arcy too, though he was unconscious of it. He had grown broader, and filled out with the better food and lighter work of the cargo boats. His face was harder, and yet less keen, the eyes still narrowed at the corners, the under-lip fallen a little as though his mouth had coarsened—on the whole, a better-looking man than he had been six or seven years back. Millicent met him on the doorstep of the old house, for he had written that he was coming.

"How well you look, D'Arcy!—you seem to have grown bigger," she said simply.

"I'm gettin' older," he replied, laying his hands affectionately on her shoulders and kissing her round cheek. Millicent was a handsome woman, and her likeness to her step-brother was most marked at this period of their lives.

"Poor mother! she would have liked to have seen you," she said with a sigh.

D'Arcy turned away without comment. The thrust went home, unintentional though it was. He felt too

keenly to speak, as was usual with him, and his half shame at his own strong emotions caused him to repress all outward evidence. Millicent thought him rather unfeeling, but put it down to his long absence and alienation from the old life and its interests.

"I suppose the old place must go," he said regretfully, as they were looking round the rooms. "I meant once never to part with it, but a rovin' life knocks the sentiment out of you. You soon lose your desire for an anchor."

"I don't like to think of Drake House sold either, but, as you say, one gets other ties and surroundings," said Millicent. "If you do not live here, D'Arcy, I do not know who should."

"What do you mean to do yourself? You must not let me forget you. I've grown selfish with havin' to look out for myself."

"I—I am going to be married! I forgot you did not know." And Millicent coloured up and looked prettier than ever.

"Why, my dear girl, why didn't you tell me? What a piece of news to keep back!" Amyas sat down in his father's old chair and drew her on to his knee, brotherly fashion. Millicent was pleased to talk, and obviously happy. It was a satisfactory way of disposing of the difficulty of her future, too. She had become engaged after her mother's death to a gentleman farmer, who had lately purchased land in the neighbourhood. He had admired Millicent for some time, and had been kind to her in her trouble, finally making her an offer.

"I am so glad you will see him, D'Arcy," said the girl. "I want you to know each other."

"And give my consent as nearest male relative? Well, Milly, I'm heartily glad, old girl! Got any more surprisin' news for me? Where's Jack?"

"Jack is in London still—he has just taken his F.R.C.S. What do you think he wants to do?"

"Get a practice, I should think."

"No; try being a doctor on one of the Lines! It is all you again, D'Arcy. Jack always wanted to follow your lead, he admires you so. He thinks there is no one else like you. I am not quite sure we have not all hero-worshipped a little!" she added, with a keen flash of recognition as she looked back through the past years and saw their universal attitude.

"Well, it's very good of you if you have, and equally foolish. I'm not sure Jack's wise. A taste of the sea is apt to unfit you for settlin' down in a practice, I should say. And he won't get the chance of havin' his fancy knocked out of him with hard work as I did."

"Was it very rough, D'Arcy? You never complained."

"I wasn't such a fool, for I meant to go on. Yes, it was rough, Milly. You never tried to live on duff and salt pork for weeks on end, did you?"

She shivered delicately. "You poor boy! Why is the food so bad?"

"Deuce knows, and the shipowners! There's no real necessity, as I'm beginnin' to see. But that and other physical hard knocks keep a good many Englishmen out of our Service, and bring in the foreigners. We've only two Scotchmen and a Yorkshireman on the *Madam* now—the rest of the crew are pickin's from Europe haphazard. I hope we shan't have war with any of their nations, that's all. We can't afford it!"

"Is your boat the *Madam*, D'Arcy?"

"Yes; I'm leavin' her. Goin' to be Mate next voyage on the *Empress*. She's a passenger boat, 5000 tons."

"How quickly you get your promotion, D'Arcy! It seems to me only the other day that you were going as fourth Officer on that big boat—the *Queen*, I think it was. Don't you remember coming down to tell us? It was the last time you were here."

"Yes." He put her gently away from him, and rising, strolled over to the window and stood staring out across the blue sea, with his hands in his pockets. His promotion *was* rapid, and he knew its source, and had always regarded it with unruffled satisfaction. Other men might talk, and he himself might affect ignorance, but he laid his good fortune secretly to the account of Lady Arthur Hyde, though he had never set eyes on her since that fateful voyage in the *Queen*. He thought, with some complaisance, that women were curiously faithful to a sentiment, and out there in his broader life across the seas he felt it a matter for self-congratulation. But in Trawles the horizon was narrower. As soon as he got into that cup in the red hills, with the sea only touching its feet, his impressionable side was affected. He positively did not care to think of the source of his advancement, and he realized how impossible it would be for Millicent to even dream of it.

Standing there at the window, where as a boy he had dreamed out across the sea so many, many times, something else came back to him also—the memory of what happened before that voyage in the *Queen*, the land-ties for ever broken.

"What's become of the Culvertons?" he said briefly.

"Oh! Nell is still in Trawles, keeping house for her father."

"He didn't leave then?"

"No; where was he to go? They still drag on in the same fashion. It makes me miserable to see it."

"And—the others?"

"Bertie is dead!" said Millicent, with a little shocked haste. She felt as if D'Arcy were indecent in making these inquiries. "He made himself ill with the life he led—the doctors said he was 'rotten with drink'! And he caught a low fever two years ago and died. Nell nursed him at the last."

"Nell—always Nell! She seems the good angel of the family."

"She is more like a brownie or an elf. She has never altered. I do not understand her!" said Millicent, shutting her lips firmly as if to dismiss the subject.

D'Arcy waited. His back asked the question his lips did not, as plainly as if he had spoken. He kept his face turned to the sea, and yet Milly knew he was waiting, and that she must answer.

"Mr. Dalkeith married her!" she said abruptly. "They live about twenty miles away. He got another living."

D'Arcy turned round from the window. "I should think that ought to improve Culverton's position!" he remarked, picking up his cap.

"It didn't much. The new vicar is a slave-driver, and spares neither himself nor his curate. I saw her one day"—the irrelevant pronoun explained itself—

"she was driving. She looks very fragile, and—and unhappy. Are you going out, D'Arcy?"

"Only for a stroll. I shall be in for supper."

He went up by the old familiar way through Trawles, pausing to look at the dripping water-mill and the forge, and catch a gossiping word of real rich Devon between two old cronies at the churchyard gate. And then he turned out into the road that runs to Exeter, the very spot where they used to play quick-catch, and there, coming towards him, was a little brown figure that he knew as he had known it for many years.

"Nell!" he said, as he had said it through the rain.

"D'Arcy——" She hesitated, for he had changed if she had not. "It *is* D'Arcy Amyas?"

"Yes. Have you forgotten me?"

"No!" She peered at him closer. "But you have altered. You are not such a good fellow as I thought you would be, D'Arcy!"

"One of your elfin speeches, Nell! Do they teach you to read character in Fairy-land?"

"No—they teach that lesson better in the real world, and it's a hard school. Where did you get that new face, D'Arcy?"

"Where I got the heart behind it, Nell—in your 'hard school'!"

She stood looking up at him with her brown eyes —fairy eyes that had always seemed to him too little human to be attractive. "I'm sorry!" she said abruptly. "I told you you would find it a hard place. You have done that, D'Arcy!"

"I've got to live in it anyway. May I walk with you, Nell? Are you goin' my way?"

"I hope not!" she said, looking into his face still more keenly. "I think it is all down-hill, D'Arcy!"

He simply laughed, and turned to stroll along by her side. She had an errand in Trawles, and they went together, talking of old days and mutual interests, and neither of them anything but amused at the glances the townspeople threw at them..

"Miss Nell's takin' a la-ad to walk wi' her, and 'tis none o'u'r sune neither!" was the general comment.

D'Arcy looked a stranger to his native place. His tanned face and thick fair hair showing beneath the line of his cap might have belonged to an alien. His eyes wrinkled at the corners more than ever as he talked, for Nell made him laugh. Her comments on her own narrow sphere of life were as crisply bitter as endive.

"Drake House is goin' to the hammer!" he said, his face clouding a moment when they paused to say good-bye at the end of the street.

"It seems a pity—but things never last—not even the life that you think you will live just the same all your days. Even I shall change some time, I suppose. We shall all come to the hammer at last!"

"Yes. It's the last wrench—it cuts me off from Trawles. I shan't come here any more, I expect."

"You've outgrown it!"

"Have I? I used to think I should come back here—and die. I hope not though. I'd rather die in the life I've chosen, disillusioned though I am—full of temptations though it is."

"What is your special temptation?" said Nell, staring at him between the eyes, as if she could read it written there.

"Shall I tell you? I never lie to you, Nell!"

"It does not matter whether you tell or not. I shall not betray confidence if you choose to, though. I am not in your life, so there is no need to hesitate. What is it?"

"Women!" he said curtly, and turned and left her with a brief lift of his cap.

"Good-bye!" she called after him, and the word had something unearthly in it to his ears, as though it rang from another world—Nell's fairy world which set her apart from the rest of her sex. D'Arcy did not include her in that suggestive title to his besetting sin. She was not a thing of flesh and blood to his mind.

But that was the last he saw of Trawles. He turned his back on the little Devonshire fishing village a few days later, and went back to London. It went to sleep in his memory as it lay asleep in the sunshine—the ring of the trawling boats busy at its foot in the bay—and he did not find cause to recall it for many a long day.

His new Captain of the *Empress* was a man whose prototype is more general in theory than in fact in the Merchant Service. But he does sometimes exist, and Captain Cross was a specimen—a big bearded man, with a rich voice, full-throated and deep as a bell—a man who rolled his orders down the ship (and they were never otherwise than answered on the instant) and made love to any woman who would let him with the same chest notes softened to a whisper. He was a martinet to his men, a rattling good fellow to his male passengers, and a tempter to anything feminine whose virtue was assailable. He is not to be blamed, for his double on shore may have less opportunity but is no less willing. He was simply a type which fulfils its destiny, and the sphere of life in

which he found himself happened to be propitious to his inclinations. The only person to whom Captain Cross presented an appearance of washed-out meekness was his wife. He was very much married to a querulous woman who suspected the gallantries she could not prove, and made him pay during the few weeks on shore for his liberty of the seas.

D'Arcy Amyas found a kindred spirit in his new Master. The other Officers held their tongues, and were as loyal to their Skipper as only their class can be; but D'Arcy alone felt any sympathy with him. Saving only his folly in having married—Captain Ronny's homilies returned in full force to his mind here—Amyas found nothing but to admire in the burly Don Juan whose seamanship was unassailable, and who took his boat back and forth with the skill and cunning of many years' hard experience.

"See here, Amyas, never too close to Ushant!" he said, giving his counsel to the Mate for the sake of their growing liking one for the other. "A mile or so nearer Lisbon than the track chart—and once you've left Cape Verde no trouble till you round the Cape itself. There's a nasty bit of shore up the coast—Burke ran his boat on the rocks there, and lost his certificate. It's a tradition on our Line that it's smart to hug Port Alfred—don't you ever do it! You've got a thousand lives or so underneath you when you're on the bridge, and that's enough to shake your nerve only to remember."

"They're not fond enough of soundin's now-a-days!" Amyas remarked, taking the cigar from his thickening lips. "Comin' up Channel in the *Signora* we hardly sounded once."

"That's Rea all over! I wonder you didn't find yourselves hung up on the Eddystone!"

"Thought we had once. There was a fog, and we must have missed it by a fluke."

"Rea's a half-breed—by Wales out of Germany. There ought to be a tax on foreigners."

"We should lose half the Service! Look here—nine men out of ten won't stand the siftin' of the Mercantile Marine. Even the foreigners train in our boats, learn the language, and then — go to America! Who wonders? The Yankees are slavers, but their ships are all well found. They feed you so that you can work. I'd have gone myself if I had been an A.B."

"They'll never reform it until the next naval war. The public don't care and don't know, and in the nature of things we've no trade union—but what a smash there will be if we ever do go to war with France or Russia! We can't possibly keep up the food supply. We should want the Navy to act as convoy, and the Navy would want us to draw on as a reserve. We can't fight and feed England too."

Both men smoked in silence for a minute. From the foc's'le came a burst of melody, for the third-class passengers were having a "sing-song"—

"Oh, Flo! what a change, you know!
When she left the village she was shy——"

"It's a precious long time since most girls 'left the village' now-a-days!" said Cross, laughing softly. "Remember that girl coming back from Madagascar last trip, Amyas?"

"Yes. That was your affair, sir, not mine!"

"It strikes me it was right enough when it came

to tallying!" laughed Cross, shaking silently with his own memories. Then he made a joke unrecordable, and all but inexplicable to laity; but Amyas appreciated its humour, and found its coarse quality only a sauce to whet his appetite.

It was not often that the Captain and the Mate were both to be found smoking and talking in the former's cabin. They were both popular among the passengers, and held their diploma for being ladies' men, and the straiter-laced among their shipload said that they played into each other's hands. But so long as the *Empress* was a favourite boat on the Line there was not much likelihood of censure from head-quarters. D'Arcy stayed with the boat and her Captain for a longer period than was usual with him on one ship, for the simple reason that he went for his year's work with the Navy while still under Captain Cross. Savernakes had no objection to giving their men leave for this object; association with the Service gave them a certain Naval smartness, lacking in Merchant Service Officers as a rule, and the Company liked their boats to be commanded by gentlemen. D'Arcy, always quick to imitate if he did not assimilate, came out of his year's training a Naval man to all surface intents and purposes. He went back to the *Empress* by chance of her first Mate's removal, and stayed with her until an unexpected death eased promotion; Cross went to the *Queen* as Commodore, and D'Arcy Amyas was given the *Duchess*, the smallest of the passenger boats, and found that at five-and-thirty he had touched the goal of his ambition, and though he was legally Master, was known to all men as Captain Amyas.

CHAPTER VIII

"Yet he hoped to purchase glory,
Hoped to make the name
Of his vessel great in story
Wheresoe'er he came.

So they passed by capes and islands,
Many a harbour-mouth,
Sailing under palmy highlands
Far within the South."

ALFRED TENNYSON.

"MAY I come in, Captain?"

"You may—and draw the curtain after you, Mrs. Burt."

The woman who entered the lamplit little space, which was cosy sitting-room, suggestive bed-room, and general store-cupboard combined, was still so much of a girl that the public, who knew her as Anstice Le Croix, considered her as a rising actress and likely to make her mark "when she was a little older." She was not inclined to depreciate her youth, and seemed thriftily inclined to laugh while life was still in its spring, for her ripe lips were generally on the verge of a smile if one had not actually broken across her sensitive, emotional face. She came across the cabin on tiptoe, her eyes dancing, as though in mock awe, and leaned over the Captain's shoulder as he sat at his writing-table, some subtle scent from her hair and bosom making itself evident to his senses.

"What *are* you doing?" she said curiously, looking at the sheet of note-paper before him and the wet pen in his hand.

"I began writin' some letters, forgot all about them, and took to drawin' you!" he said quietly.

"How clever!" She reached over his shoulder and took the pen-and-ink sketch, which certainly showed talent. It was an outline of her head and bust, not cut off at the shoulders as head studies usually are, but emphasizing in the plain curves of her figure a certain sensuous quality about her.

It is possible that Mrs. Burt recognized this fact, for she drew her brows together over her laughing eyes, and brought her hand down against the side of his head. And if ever a box on the ear were as dainty a caress as a kiss, that one was so.

"How horrid of you!" she said. "You are a hateful person."

She glanced to right and left,—at the safely-guarded portholes and the draped doorway—listened, clasped her hands lightly under his chin, and bending over him, kissed him honestly on the lips.

"As recognition of your talent!" she said, throwing herself into the arm-chair at his side. "Why do you draw me as a courtesan? How well you think you know me!"

"I didn't draw you as a—— Why use an ugly word?" He leaned back and looked at her with blue eyes which narrowed at the corners. "All women are courtesans, if you will have it so. It is a natural instinct."

"All women are courtesans—to *me!*" she corrected, with lifted brows. "Did I not say you were horrid?"

She closed her full lips musingly, and bent her eyes upon him. "How long is it since we found out that we had a mutual affinity?" she asked abruptly.

"Two days, since you began to be kind to me, isn't it? I had discovered the attraction—on my side at least—before!"

"And two days and a half since we left Durban. Half a day thrown in, during which I had time to make discoveries. Captain Amyas, may I speak to you with the impertinence of a friend?"

"You may speak to me anyhow, save as Captain Amyas!" he answered, making a few idle strokes on the blotting-paper. Then suddenly he flung away his pen, and pushed his chair back, and bent over her.

"Ah! Anstice, why are we wastin' precious time?" he said. "You know you did not come here for that!"

She yielded her mouth to his for a moment, then put her slender hands on his breast and pushed him back from her.

"No more—for I have really something to say," she said. "Something serious. Ah, you laugh at that in connection with me; but I have been madly in love for two days remember—what should make me serious, if not that?"

"I will listen then." He sat down again in his chair, but turned his face to her, and leaning forward, took her hands in his and fondled them. "Now tell me," he said, the soft hoarse tone more suggestive of accent, as always happened when his passions rose.

"I am going to be impertinent—I told you so!" Her fingers twined round his. "I am going to give you good advice. My friend, when you came on

board at Durban you had had quite enough to drink!"

Her eyes had grown grave, but their glance was soft and pleading. Amyas always listened to women—he had found it pay. And this woman was in earnest. He nodded. "Yes—I had been sayin' a good many farewells. I was not drunk though."

"I know you were not. It would not have mattered very much if you had been, leaving harbour, so long as you could take your boat out safely—Durban Bar is no joking matter! But as I say, that may pass. What I want to know is, why you run risks now?"

"How?"

"You drink too much. Oh, I know that all the Officers on board are abstinent at table, but the passengers wish to treat you, and you are always drinking with one and another. It is a bad plan."

He considered a moment, looking away from her. A direct gaze confused him and muddled his thoughts, unless he were so fiercely full of passion that nothing could stand against it.

"It is the law of the Line," he said at last. "You don't understand our boats perhaps, but they must be popular to pay. The man who attracts the most passengers stands the best chance with the firm. Do you see? Since I had the *Duchess* she has not had a dozen cabins empty, outward or homeward."

"I see." She looked thoughtful, her eyes dilating as they rested on him, her restless fingers still twining round his. "It is a temptation, and yet I think you are wrong. Make yourself agreeable in some other way, or shift your drinks skilfully, if you really must

take them, so that your brain shall always be clear. You want your wits about you to rise, as well as to be popular. If you were not quite all there—not quite yourself—terrible things might happen, and even if there were no real danger it might mean ruin for you, reported to your Owners."

He sat silent for a moment, thinking. The knit between his brows was a deep furrow, and Anstice watched it, wondering at his control of his temper. She might well have vexed him, but he showed no sign of impatience with her when he glanced at her at last.

"You may be right. Clever women generally are. You have thought this out."

"I should not have spoken if I had not liked you so well!"

"I know. I owe all my success in life to women. They have made me what I am. I shall take your words to heart."

Her gravity vanished. She sprang up impulsively and held out her arms to him, her face a rainbow of smiles and emotion.

"You darling fellow! You have the wit of one man in a thousand, and the intuition too. Very few of your sex recognize that a woman is trying to help them when she speaks too straightly to be pleasant. U-m-m-m!" (This was murmured into D'Arcy's fair beard.) "Let me come on your knee!"

He laughed, and shifted himself into the arm-chair, giving her the position she suggested. "I am sure I hope my husband will not be prowling round! I left him in a fine temper," said Anstice, laughing. "'Where are you going, Anstice?' he said. 'To the

library for a book!' I answered. See! here it is —*Romola*—as if I should read *Romola!* Then I walked straight through the deckhouse, and down the port side of the deck, and came in here!"

"And who saw you come in?"

"Two stewards, and the Doctor. They will not peach. That is fortunate, as they say that a woman's reputation is gone so soon as she enters your cabin and the curtain falls behind her!"

"And where then is your own?"

"On the other side of the curtain, I presume! I left it on the deck to put on again when I came out —I might be cold after my present quarters!" She cuddled down into his arms and laid her face against his bearded one.

"Isn't it rather a pity to suffer for sins uncommitted?" he whispered.

"No, I draw the line there! I told you so from the first. People may say what they like, but I am a good wife."

"You will never get the credit of it—you may just as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb!"

She sighed a little. "Don't tempt me. You know I have grown foolishly fond of you, and who would care for the little thin red man who calls himself my husband? He always puts me in mind of a dried herring!"

"And to whom you are yet a good wife!"

"No, I am not, and you know it!" she flashed out. "Sitting on your knee—lying in your arms—allowing you every liberty that a fast man can take! No woman is good who does as I do, though she keep herself clean from one essential thing. I wonder

why women love you, *mon capitaine?* For you do not understand love. To you it is merely a passion —a coarse thing, which degrades itself and the woman whom you honour with your preference—*Captain Amyas' preference!*" She stopped breathless, looked in his stormy face, and one of her swift changes came over her. "It is no matter; I love you—for the moment!" she said.

"Do as I ask then—hush! some one comin'."

The tap at the door found Captain Amyas sitting at the table, making rough drafts for navigation while he chatted amicably with Mrs. Burt, who, with inimitable sang-froid, was smoking a cigarette while she leaned back in his easy-chair. The intruder was the chief Officer, who entered cap in hand at sight of the lady.

"Can I speak to you, sir?"

"What is it, Guinness? Don't go, Mrs. Burt!"

"I must—it is so late. Good-night, Mr. Guinness! Good-night, Captain!"

Amyas rose, and raised the opposite curtain for her. She passed out into the warm dark night, with an upward glance into his face. There was plenty of meaning, and of question, there, but she shook her head slightly and walked off down the deck.

Amyas returned to the table. "Now, Guinness?" he said.

"The discontent among the men, sir!"

"Well?"

"It is growing."

"Not died out yet, hasn't it?" D'Arcy Amyas pulled himself together as he sat quietly making his navigation charts. "It is our own men, of course?"

"Yes; the foreigners are civil and obliging enough," said Guinness bitterly.

"Ah! . . . Can you knock a man down, Guinness?"

The Captain looked, perhaps a little slightingly, at the Mate's small figure. Joe Guinness was a good little fellow—a straight-living, unimaginative man, who might have stood for Bernard Savernake's old type of the best Merchantman. He knew his profession thoroughly, and had grown to dislike it almost as much. He had risen by dogged persistence, for he was slow by nature, and being also honest he very much disapproved of the reputation of the man above him, which disapproval, albeit never breathed to a living soul, made itself ever conscious to Amyas' flexible mind. He did not essentially like the Mate, and his question was the more subtle for this reason.

"I have done so before now," said Guinness stiffly.

"You had better do it again then, if you come in contact with any more discontent. It sometimes answers. Don't drag me into it if it can be helped. I don't want to make too much of it."

The Captain returned to his drawing and the Mate retired. If Amyas had not been so perfectly cool Guinness might have been very much more worried, but there is after all something reassuring in a person who cannot or will not even take danger into his calculations. As a matter of fact, Amyas was thinking more of Mrs. Burt's advice than of the disaffection among the men. The latter was mainly due to the extra service imposed upon them by the consideration given to the passengers on Savernakes' boats. Decks were scrubbed when the passengers had left the deck and gone to their cabins—not in regular routine after

the morning watch was called at 5 a.m., because the noise of the men at work would disturb the slumbers of people whose cabins were on or immediately under the promenade deck. This irregularity was trying for the crew, whose work, however, Amyas regarded as mere child's play compared with his own knowledge of what it was in sailing vessels. There was a spirit of anarchy among the men which he had not traced to its root, but the trouble was one which would have expounded his own theories. Amyas was a man who took his profession seriously, in spite of those lighter passages which were gaining him a lurid reputation. He fully understood the significance of the foreign element which was rapidly increasing year by year, and deplored it, though he acknowledged that as a rule the troublesome members of a ship's crew were most unfortunately the British. He had on board the *Duchess* an unusual element of Greeks, and the subtle ingenuity of that nation, coupled with the reckless brutality of three or four English mongrels—half-breeds from the south of London, whose parentage owned a strain out of 'Frisco and Adelaide—were combining to ferment and bring about an explosion.

The question of his own indiscretion assumed much more serious proportions to D'Arcy Amyas than those of his men, at the moment when the two came up before him. He was no drunkard, and with the usual etiquette of 'board ship took water with his meals; but his popularity demanded that he should take and stand peg for peg, and the denial of such a custom would put it to a severe strain, he feared. Would it be possible to do as Mrs. Burt suggested,

and "manœuvre" his drinks? he wondered with grim amusement. It was a thoroughly feminine notion, and required a woman's skill to adapt such a fine device! Nevertheless Amyas could take a good suggestion. He wanted neither the muddled head nor the reputation of a tippler on his own boat.

He had an opportunity of making his first essay in prudent moderation and sobriety the very next morning. He was going round the ship just before noon, chatting to one and another, when he heard himself hailed jovially from the door of the smoking-room.

"Hulloa, Captain! Come in and have a drink. What shall it be?"

The offer came from an influential quarter—a man of millions who went backwards and forwards to Johannesburg, and whose patronage of Savernakes' Line drew a large percentage of his friends with him. A lightning review of the situation flashed over Amyas' mind, and he handled it as delicately as he ever did the sextant.

"Can't take anythin' just now, thanks!" he said, laying his hand familiarly on the millionaire's shoulder. "I've got to take the sun, and that's about enough for my head. By the way," he lowered his voice into confidential amusement that brought an answering smile to the other's face, "what do you think of that young lady?"

A girl had strolled past them slowly towards the deckhouse, bearing a shawl and a book with her. She was tall and well-dressed, but with an air of languor and quasi-invalidism about her.

"Ah! funny thing you should have mentioned it!"

said the millionaire. "We've all been speaking of her. Paxton, you were saying she was pretty!"

The man addressed joined them in the doorway, and two or three other smokers came over, cigar in hand, to look at the girl in question as she sauntered up the deck.

"She poses as an invalid—never gets up till twelve o'clock!" said one. "Can't see that there's much the matter with her!"

"I don't call her bad-looking—but she's by no means the prettiest woman on board."

"Not bad style, though!"

"I tell you what," said Amyas deliberately. "She wears the most beautiful underclothing of any woman I ever met!"

The millionaire burst into a roar of laughter. The Captain's hand was still on his shoulder—the prestige of such familiarity flattered him as much as the last speech tickled his palate. "Make yourself agreeable in some other way," Mrs. Burt had said. Amyas was applying her advice. His intimate action with the man who would have treated him was only the alternative—the girl walking into the deckhouse was only the sacrifice—offered for his popularity.

"Come, Captain Amyas," said one of the other men more seriously, "since you have said so much I think you had better explain a little further!"

Two or three of the listeners had moved away with a light laugh. They went back to their distant tables, out of earshot, with a satirical wonder whether Amyas were the ladykiller that he posed to be—but on the whole concluding that there was no smoke without fire.

"Well, as you say, she never comes on deck till midday. I go my rounds of the cabins before she leaves hers sometimes, and I have unintentionally intruded on her when she was doing her hair without her frock on. That was all I meant—of course!"

"It sounded otherwise!" said one of his hearers dryly. But the millionaire was laughing till he was red in the face. Whether or no he believed the explanation he looked as if he were enjoying himself.

Amyas turned away and went up to the chart-room where his Officers awaited him. Perhaps his clearer brain this morning made him keener over the half-hour's navigation, but it chanced anyhow that he differed from the second Mate on the position of the boat. They were still arguing amicably when there came a sound that made the Captain raise his head.

The echo of a hoarse roar—the sound of men scuffling—a voice raised in angry expostulation—such sounds as are inexcusable under the law and order of a ship. Every Officer was off the boat deck and on the bridge, looking down on the foc's'le, before the sounds died away, the Captain's demeanour in every way the quietest of them all.

And yet he knew and recognized what was happening as did none of the others, and his mind and nerves were braced to meet a possible danger. Somewhere in the recesses of his soul Amyas saw and knew a demon of fear which struck a quivering jar through all his nerves at the mere mention of pain or a difficulty to be faced. But this knowledge of his was buried so deep in him that his brain hardly acknowledged it—the less so because the second after that inevitable sensation of nausea his nerves

and senses would be strung like steel wire, and his mind be cool to judge instantly and execute justice immediately. The power which always came to him with the necessity to face a great moment, after that first spasm of revulsion, was the most terrifying, to himself, of all his experiences.

The cause of the trouble at the moment was that six men had forced their way to the spirits carried on the boat, attacked and stunned the chief steward, and made such good use of their opportunities that they were all more or less drunk. The outrage was discovered by seeing a light in the store-room, and when the quartermaster demanded their instant abandonment of their position, the scuffle ensued whose noise reached even those sharpened ears on the boat deck. The mutineers and the repelling party hustled each other up on to the foc's'le deck, contesting every inch of the way, and making as much clamour as if half the crew, instead of about a dozen, were engaged in a hand-to-hand encounter. All that the passengers knew was that there was a drunken row in the third-class—they thought it was amongst the steerage passengers, until the sound of the Captain's voice rang down the promenade deck giving an order that threw a new light on the proceedings.

"Lock the women in their cabins. The men will follow me."

He did not know when he spoke how many of the crew had mutinied, or how large a trouble he might not have to face. As a fact, of the six disaffected men three were incapable from the spirits they had drunk, and of the remaining three, a bullet wound in

the arm soon brought two to reason. The ringleader, the supple hot-blooded Greek, was just enough inflamed to be as dangerous as a wild beast at bay. It was on him that the Captain turned with a fury suppressed, but equal in depth to his own.

The ladies who had been sitting about on deck had been driven as a flock of sheep into the deck-house, and in most cases were willing enough to obey orders and take refuge in their own cabins. The stewards turned the keys on them, and returned to the deck to see what could be seen of the affair, and found the male passengers had, to a man, answered the Captain's demand by moving up in a mass behind him, seemingly extremely willing for the fray. One or two had rushed down to their cabins for such arms as they possessed, but the majority trusted to the persuasion of muscle alone should they get a chance to fight.

When it came to Mrs. Burt's turn to be locked in, however, she turned to bay and refused the ignominy.

"I am not a child to be treated like this," she said. "I wish to know what goes on. My—husband is on deck." But it was not of the man whom she had likened to a red herring that she thought at the moment.

"The Captain is afraid of some one getting shot, madam," said the distracted steward, overawed by a stronger will.

"I promise not to come on deck unless I see an imperative necessity—unless I hear something that forces me to come—but I will not be locked in," said Anstice, and the man perforce left her sitting

quietly there with her hands pressed together and the cabin door flung wide.

Overhead she could hear voices, and occasionally shouts—the tramping of feet—and then shots. She half started up, listening with strained attention, but there were no cries, and the riot seemed quieting down. After a few minutes of the intolerable silence she walked swiftly through the deserted alleyways and up on deck, where a scene met her eyes as silently dramatic as any she remembered on the stage.

Every man on the boat seemed to have gathered together on the lower deck near the for'ard hatch. Anstice stood above them, leaning over the rail, and looked down at their tense, absorbed faces. Immediately below her lay the three men who were stupid with drink, with some of the loyal portion of the crew mounting guard over them. The shots she had heard had evidently taken effect on the big Englishman and another slighter bluejacket, for they were being sternly dealt with by the doctor as though he would offer his services for the sake of common humanity—but no more. The centre of the group were the Greek and Captain Amyas; there was scarce a yard between them, but the rebel stood as if at bay, untouched and free-handed. Even as Anstice's eyes fell on them Amyas gave the order to arrest the mutineer, and before it could be executed the man had sprung forward and closed with him. She saw them rock backwards and forwards as she clung to the rail, stricken speechless and helpless with her fear. A dozen men rushed to the rescue, but not before the Greek had lowered his head and

fastened his teeth like a mad dog in Amyas' arm. Anstice saw him shaken off before other assistance could reach them, with a sickening of her senses—she saw, too, the straight blow planted fair between the eyes which sent the mutineer down on the deck with a thud, though the next instant Amyas' arm dropped to his side helpless and disabled. The Greek had bitten clean through the white uniform which the Officers all wore during the hot weather—had it been the blue cloth his savage effort would have been useless, though his drunken force while he held on would still have wrenched the muscles. She sank on her knees, her hands still clasping the rail, and her breath sobbing between her drawn lips, and there Joseph Guinness found her when he returned to the deck a minute later to assume a momentary responsibility as Master in his senior's place.

Amyas' wound was not sufficient to incapacitate him in any way after it had been dressed. It was slightly inflamed, and his arm bruised and painful so that he went about with it in a sling, but his composure when he appeared on deck was quite unruffled. The accident had caused quite an excitement on the voyage, and of course he found himself something of a hero amongst the feminine portion of his passengers. He was shrewd enough neither to encourage nor discourage their eulogies, leaving the incident to add to his popularity as it might. His apparent freedom from any anxiety smoothed over the disturbing sense of danger that might have grown amongst the passengers, and as a fact the mutiny was nipped in the bud at the right moment. The rebels were put in irons, but no further sign of dissatisfaction appeared

among the crew, even though they were short of hands until they reached Southampton.

The first time that Anstice Le Croix saw Amyas alone after the affray she came into his cabin, where he was resting one afternoon, under excuse of inquiries from the passengers.

"We are thinking of celebrating your recovery by giving you a dinner, if you will let us," she said, sitting down by his side.

He shook his head. "It is very kind of you, but it makes too much of the affair."

"Well, do let us do *something!* May we stand champagne and drink your health to-night?"

"What, after all your lectures on temperance? How can you be so inconsistent?"

"Ah, forgive me. I have felt so humiliated when I remembered my impertinence to you only the night before. To think that I presumed to criticize you!"

"My dear girl, why shouldn't you? As I told you, I always listen to women. And your advice had the effect in all probability of keepin' me a cool head when I wanted it most. It would have been a nasty moment for me when Safridi flew at me if I had had as much liquor as he had had!"

She shivered, and lifting his unharmed hand, laid it against her lips.

"I saw it all," she confessed. "I know I was disobeying your orders, but I could not be locked up while you were in danger, to know nothing about it. Oh, I saw that if any one came to harm it would be you—I felt it!"

He laughed, and pressed his hand carelessly against

her face. "There was not much harm, he only bit like any other wild beast."

"And you knocked him down! I wonder why a woman loves to see one man knock another down?" she said, half laughing and half crying, her emotions all run loose at the mere memory. "Do you know what I thought at that moment?" she whispered. "I wondered why I had ever said 'No' to you about —anything. I could not have done so then."

"Could you now?"

She looked up, her eyes half full of tears, her lips laughing tremulously. "Oh!" she cried, slipping down on her knees by his side, "you are a man!—a *man!* I would give you anything that you asked—anything that a woman may."

CHAPTER IX

"I will look into his future,
I will bless it till it shine,
Should he never be a suitor
Unto fairer eyes than mine!"
E. BARRETT BROWNING.

THE horseshoe table was comfortably filled without that pressure for space which besets so many Company dinners, and furthermore, there was a desirable leaven of outsiders to counteract the element of those intrinsically interested in Savernakes'. When the great firm gave a dinner they were wise in their generation, and issued invitations to people in high places whose presence lent an air of distinction to the function, as well as being "good for trade" on advertisement lines. Women, beautifully dressed and beautifully mannered, brought their fair faces and costly gowns to add lustre to their husbands, who had probably purchased the jewels they wore through some fortunate connection with Savernakes'; but the trade aspect of the entertainment was gracefully ignored, or so lightly acknowledged that it lost its vulgar significance.

"What is this tale of a mutiny, Sir John?" said Lady Arthur Hyde to the present head of the firm. Sir John Cross turned from the sweets offered him, and raised his eyebrows with a deprecating comicality. Lady Arthur was leaning forward, her fair face raised as though in anticipation of a story; he thought, as

he noticed the firm white neck against the purple velvet of her gown, that some beauty is immortal. For how many years had Lord Arthur been on the Board? And he was a married man before he was a Director. But in view of Lady Arthur's fearlessly raised face the question was a heresy. Women of any questionable age did not court inspection under electric light, however shaded.

"Shop! shop! My dear lady!" he protested, shaking his head. "How can I answer you?"

"Oh, we are all friends here." She laughed a little, and sipped her Perrier Jouet daintily. "Captain Harrington has a story of mutiny that makes one's blood dance! Is it possible anything so romantic can intrude on steam in these prosaic days?"

"Not very romantic for the Master," said her *vis-à-vis*. "A set of drunken ruffians probably, dissatisfied with their food. Was it the firemen who gave rise to the story, Savernake?"

"No," said the youngest member of the firm briefly. "As I heard it, it was the crew above deck. There was a foreign element in it, I believe—an unusual cause of trouble, I grieve to say."

"Why, Mr. Savernake, would you have a mutiny every voyage?" asked another lady, turning to him.

"No," said Bernard Savernake grimly; "but I am British enough to wish that all the bad qualities were confined to other countries, and that our own seamen were as civil and hard-working as the Swedes or French. It never will be so until a great reform takes place in our Merchant Service, and so until then the foreigners will get the berths over the heads of

the British—and small blame to the owners who employ them."

One or two men smiled covertly as Mr. Savernake's mouth shut with a snap, and the corners drew down like an inverted half-moon. "Savernake mounted on his hobby," was the general expectation. But he had said his say, and dropped back into his self-contained silence, a dry, keen-faced old gentleman whose forty years of ship-owning had taught him the weary hopelessness of reform.

"But the story." Lady Arthur's soft voice had a ripple of careless amusement. "I am like a child who only wants the narrative part, am I not? Won't somebody tell me? Has one of our boats really mutinied?"

An impressionable Director came to the rescue with an answering smile for her asking eyes.

"Forgive me if I embroider in the hope of pleasing you, Lady Arthur," he announced, and the buzz at that end of the table died into a waiting silence after his laughing appeal. "Know then that Savernakes' boasts a Captain who has brought his ship safely home in the teeth of rank insubordination among the crew, with one of whom he had a hand-to-hand struggle—yes, indeed, Lady Arthur—before he overcame him, and the man was put in irons. What do you say now?"

"Oh, I would like to have been there, of course. And did this Captain come off unharmed? You have not told us which of the boats it was."

"I have not heard, to remember it, or whether the mutineers did any physical damage."

"Yes; unfortunately to the plucky Captain," put

in another man. "I heard that the rebel turned to bay, wild-cat fashion, and bit to the bone."

"Brute!" said Lady Arthur with dainty disdain. "I hope our hero was not injured?"

"Oh no. The *Duchess*—that was the boat, Farringdon, and her Captain's name was Amyas—came home safely."

"Amyas!" said Bernard Savernake in some surprise. "The son of my old friend, Captain Amyas?"

"The same, I suppose. His father was a Naval man."

"You don't say so! I remember the present man as a lad, rather a slight sensitive little fellow. He has come out unexpectedly!"

Lady Arthur was looking up at the gentleman who had supplied the name of the ship with strangely bright eyes. They bewildered him, and he almost stammered over the answer to her next question. She was a very pretty woman.

"I hope this Captain Amyas was really not hurt?"

"Oh dear no, I think not. He probably got as much petting and sympathy as he could do with from the ladies among his passengers!"

"Rather addicted that way, isn't he?" said an influential outsider, whose interest in Savernakes' was merely one of availing himself of the quick transit the Line afforded for business in Natal and Madagascar. "When I was last on a boat where he was in command there was nearly a mutiny among the passengers rather than the crew. The men objected to Captain Amyas' too great gallantries to the wives

and daughters they had with them—I never heard of the wives and daughters complaining themselves, however! There was a threatened appeal to the Company."

Lady Arthur's inspiring eyes dropped to her plate. For one moment it is possible that the career of D'Arcy Amyas hung in the balance.

"Fancy a pathetic appeal to Savernakes' not to appoint too fascinating Officers, for the peace of mind of some poor meek little Johannesburgher who cannot keep his feminine belongings in order!" A ripple of laughter greeted the suggestion, in praise of its very absurdity. But Lady Arthur's eyes were still cast down.

"Amyas is a nice fellow though," some one testified. "I travelled with him last year, and he struck me as a man who thoroughly knew his work, and was a gentleman too, by Jove! No wonder the women like him. It is rather singular that he has remained unmarried."

Then Amyas' good genius spoke by the mouth of an unconscious prophet.

"I heard some tale of a lost ideal—no, don't laugh, Mrs. Farringdon, this is most pathetic. Poor Amyas lost his heart when quite a young man, and has remained touchingly true to his hopeless love. I think you ought to weep! Why will your sex be so cruel?"

"Such constancy is certainly rare! But why would she not have him? I hear on all sides that he is a very popular man."

"Report does not say. Perhaps she was already out of reach when he met her——"

"He seems to have better qualities than mere social gifts," said Lady Arthur suddenly. She drew up her throat, and her voice came with a curious thrill. Mr. Bernard Savernake, watching her from his unostentatious corner, wondered if the soft brightness of her eyes owed all its glamour to the electric light, or—was it really moisture?

"It seems to me that to check a mutiny on the seas to-day is every whit as deserving of praise and wonder as in the old times of so-called romance when such things were more common," she said. "I am proud that it happened on our Line! I should like to have been there."

"And to have congratulated Captain Amyas!" said somebody, laughing.

"And to have congratulated the Captain. I should like to sail in that man's ship—one would at all events feel absolute confidence in his power and resources, whatever occurred."

Her roused voice carried enthusiasm with it. One of her auditors said "Hear! hear!"—the women flushed—and the men felt a glow of admiration as for some unknown hero. Mr. Bernard Savernake leaned a little over the table, caught Lady Arthur's eyes with his, and held them.

"You have never sailed with Captain Amyas?" he suggested.

"I am sorry to say no!" she answered, meeting his gaze with the frankness and fearlessness of a child. "I have not been on our Line of late years, and when I did so it was probably before Captain Amyas' time. I may possibly have been in the same boat with him"—she calculated the knowledge behind

those satirical eyes watching her—"but he must have been a very junior Officer if so. I am growing an old woman."

The men looked their disclaimer—the women a critical desire to prove the words. Lady Arthur was physically and mentally invulnerable. She turned straight to Sir John Cross.

"What is this new monster we are building?" she said playfully. "Twelve thousand tons, is she not?"

"Yes, about the same size as the *Queen*. She will be a fine ship. What is she to be called, Savernake? The *Princess*, is she not? All our boats have ladies' titles—a compliment to your sex, Lady Arthur."

"You ought to give her to Captain Amyas. Oh, I know what you would say! The fear of showing favouritism—a junior man put over the heads of his fellows—the unwritten law of Promotion-according-to-each-man-in-his-turn. But it seems to me that the Officer who has proved himself the most capable is the real man for promotion—the safest Captain for the most important boat, and the one whose turn really comes before all others!"

"Well done, Lady Arthur! you shall speak at the next General Meeting!" said Savernake blandly.

"You are all laughing at me." She drew back flushed but radiant. "But woman's wit is sometimes better than man's logic. Think over my suggestion, Sir John."

"Make it afresh to your husband when he is Chairman of the Board," said Sir John dryly. It was well known that Lord Arthur would probably fill that post at some future date.

Lady Arthur gave a quick glance at her husband's unconscious face, as he mumbled over his grapes and talked of the Education Bill with his neighbour. Perhaps she weighed her power; perhaps she merely wondered how far a man would remain conveniently blind. Whatever her thoughts, she dropped the recent subject, and turning to the man next her, spoke easily and well of a new play whose first night she had just witnessed.

Mr. Bernard Savernake, sitting opposite, listened, and drew down the corners of his mouth until the half-moon started into greater prominence than ever.

"Yes, it is a problem play, but we are all such problems that it is a relief to leave puzzling over ourselves to puzzle over our mimics instead!" said Lady Arthur.

"That's a clever woman," said Mr. Bernard Savernake.

CHAPTER X

"So I steered my ship and I set my sails,
And another day has floated by;
I made my way amid ocean whales;
The sea is happy, and so am I."
The Sailor's Shocking Story.

"Heave or sink it, leave or drink it, we were masters of the sea!"—RUDYARD KIPLING.

FOUR men were sitting in the glass lounge known as "Ulundi Square" of the Royal Hotel at Durban, one afternoon in the following spring, smoking and drinking whisky-and-soda. The Royal is rather a happy hunting-ground of Officers of the boats touching at Durban, and all these four were in the Merchant Service. Three of them indeed where in Savernakes'; the fourth was on a no less great Line, and had been lunching on the *Duchess* with her Captain before they came ashore.

"So Corry has got your biggest boat, Amyas," said the man who was an outsider of Savernakes', as he lit his cigar. "Here, boy! bring me some ice in this." The tall Zulu stepped across the tessellated pavement on silent bare feet, took the tumbler held out to him and retreated. "Know anything of him?"

"No," said Amyas, "except that I hear he is rather a parson. They used to call the *Madam* the 'prayer-

ship' when he had her." There was a faint sneer in his very tone.

The ships that Captain Amyas commanded were not remarkable for their religious observances; as a fact he hated anything connected with the Church of England for the old ranking sore that he never acknowledged, and that had never healed.

"Guinness was telling me a tale about that," said Miles of the *Mem Sahib*. "They were coming into Cape Verde once, and something went wrong with the shaft. The Engineer—MacCormic, old Mac, you know—was voting all the gear to Davy Jones, and the Captain came into his cabin in the middle of his remarks. 'Mr. MacCormic,' he said, 'you need not foul your lips. We are in the Lord's hands!' 'Then He's a varra bad engineer to get the shaft sae canty!' retorted Mac. The men vowed that the Captain got up a prayer-meeting that night on purpose to pray for Mac!"

Amyas laughed shortly. "You were with him last trip, weren't you, Jack?" he said.

Jack Amyas nodded. He was still bullet-headed and dogged, the latter quality having been the means of getting him on to one of Savernakes' ships as doctor, whereby he could follow, though humbly and at a distance, in his step-brother's wake. He was a kindly, quiet little fellow, far more widely popular than D'Arcy in reality, and with half the latter's instinct for success.

"How did you like it?" said Miles sympathetically.

"Not much," was the laconic answer. "He had his points. He has never made a bad accident."

"That's more by luck than judgment, if he's always on his knees," said the outsider, unconscious that Captain Corry would have said that the latter was the reason of his immunity, and that the "luck" was Providence. "Had any more mutinies, Amyas?"

"No, and I don't want any. What was your last run?"

"Sixteen days and a half. It was a record trip—record cargo, record passenger list, record speed."

"We can't do it in the time," said Miles regretfully. "But then we go further."

"You make awfully smart passages, I know. You don't carry cargo though, do you?"

"Yes, but not much on our passenger boats. They are built all for passenger accommodation, you see."

"Oh, I know you're the dukes of the Service! The passengers are the fetish of your Line, and so long as you please the passengers you can't go wrong yourselves. Your entertainment money is unlimited, and they treat you like gentlemen, and don't ask for the farthing change. I have nothing to complain of now, *tang de Lord*, as the niggers say; but I *have* been on Lines where they wanted every penny accounted for."

"The whole system is rotten," said D'Arcy impatiently. "The Master of a ship is only so in name now. But it isn't only that that is ruinin' the Merchant Service—it's the foreign competition. It spoils the market just as it does any other trade. As long as a German will sign for starvation wages, and accept treatment that kills our own men, body and

soul, the conditions will never alter. We want foreigners taxed, or forced to become naturalized subjects, or excluded entirely!"

"You're an R.N.R. man, aren't you?" said the outsider dryly. "I know the style."

"Yes; the Reserve has faults, but it's about the only loophole left us. Aren't you?"

"Not I! I mean to leave the sea the first chance I get. There used to be some chance of pay or promotion years ago, but who puts their sons into the Merchant Service now who knows anything about it? No one—there's nothing in it. Any fool can learn to be an Officer on a steamer, but even a fool leaves when he finds out what his prospects are!"

"Well, it's a poor look-out in the next war," said Miles despondently. "But I'm sorry for the poor old country. Nice fools we shall look when the Navy wants to draw on us as a reserve. I say, Amyas, can you fancy some of our men serving? Corry, for instance?"

"He would consider warfare wrong, and muzzle the guns with Scripture texts!"

"I see the *Princess* is launched," remarked the outsider, as if the reference to Captain Corry brought his mind back to Savernakes'.

"Who's to have her?" said Amyas, smiling. He took a coin out of his pocket and sent it spinning into the air. "Heads Ronaldson—tails Lyng," he said, "as Corry is out of it."

"They ought to give her to you, D'Arcy," Jack Amyas said simply, "if they want her kept full."

There was the briefest silence, for the truth and the audacity of the suggestion were about equal.

"It will be some time before I command a 12,000 tonner!" said D'Arcy, putting the coin back in his pocket. "Have you heard anything more about the mail contract, Miles? How in the world we have kept our Line to what it is, unsubsidized, only the Directors know! Could your Line do it?" he asked the outsider.

"I should be sorry to belong to any Line without the mail contract," was the dry response. "But the story goes that you *are* subsidized—secretly, by Government, in the event of a war."

"If so we don't know anythin' about it ourselves, and though it might be so under the United States Government, or even the German, it's damned unlike the British! What the deuce have they ever cared about the Naval Reserve? They don't acknowledge the Mercantile Marine, and all their care is to cut down the mail contracts until we can't compete with the foreign lines. Have we really got the mails, Miles?"

"Yes, it's a fact. We are to have the contract for Madagascar, and so we shall be able to write the magic R.M.S. before the boat's name at last. Lord Arthur Hyde got us that. It was a good thing for the Company to put him into the Chair."

"Is he Chairman?" said D'Arcy, looking up with sudden personal interest. "I hadn't heard."

"Yes, he's Chairman. Old Cross retired as sleeping partner. When do you take the *Duchess* to Cape Town, Amyas?"

"To-morrow, if our great man can get off," said the Captain, laughing. "If not we must kick our heels on the Bar for another twenty-four hours."

"Are you coming to Cape Town?" said the outsider in some surprise. "How is that? We can't have you trespassing on our route, Amyas!"

"Some freak of the Company's—it is an unprecedented thing," said D'Arcy carelessly.

The fact was that a great man—a semi-official—had been graciously pleased to signify that he would like to travel by one of Savernakes' boats if she could be taken round to Cape Town, where of course they did not touch as a rule. The Company were obliging, as it behoved them to be. Without throwing their passengers into inconvenience by altering the usual service, they adapted a cargo boat in the place of one of the smaller vessels, and the *Duchess* being then at Durban, they deputed D'Arcy Amyas to take the semi-official whither he would go, and then bring his boat home as usual. His trip being a little out of order it was probable that he would not have a full boat home, but he was known as a Captain who attracted custom, and it was not likely that the *Duchess* would be empty.

The conversation in Ulundi Square shifted and wandered, but generally hovered on the confines of "shop." Who had taken his boat home; what men had been removed to another berth; in what way the Service was likely to alter, and whether there were any chance of abuses being mended. The men grumbled a little; that was natural with promotion deadly slow, no pensions, and a life that was full of wearing responsibility and small discouragements.

"Look here!" said Miles at one point. "What chance do we ever get, first to last? Can any of you think of your sailing days without a shudder? I

suppose we were as likely little chaps as other boys, but tumbled head-first into that hell of a life, we were bound to be moulded into blackguards of some sort."

"It's a healthy life anyway, isn't it?" said Jack Amyas quietly. "Don't you think you've got some advantage over the city clerk grinding in an office all day?"

"I don't know," said D'Arcy with a trace of hesitation. "It's not exactly healthy either. Look at the extremes of heat and cold we are absolutely livin' in! Passin' backwards and forwards, through the tropics to temperate regions—which are beastly cold at sea!—always exposed, always on the same monotonous route. No, I don't call it exactly healthy for mind or body. The Naval men are moved from station to station, with time to get acclimatized. We are passin' backwards and forwards for the best part of our lives over the same seas!"

"I think you'd find the difference if you tried the office," said Jack dryly, "and see the advantages of your present position."

"Oh, it's a weary world!" said the outsider, dropping back in his basket-chair and staring up at the glass roof and the palms. "You've got the plums of the profession in your Line—you gold-laced dandies! What in heaven's name does your uniform cost you, Amyas?"

"It depends on your means," said Amyas. He had come into his patrimony years ago, by the terms of his father's will, and did not save his private income. What did not go on his clothes went on his ship—not in absolute gold-leaf, or supplying deficiencies, as it

might have done in the Navy, but in various small ways that were no doubt factors in his popularity. It was Captain Amyas, for instance, who worked up the band of the *Duchess* until they were a thorn in the flesh and an envy to the Captains of larger vessels. He was reported to bribe them to improve themselves; he had certainly supplied them with better instruments. But there was no detail which would please the passengers and fill his cabins which he neglected.

"Seen the papers?" Jack Amyas said, tossing a month-old *Daily Telegraph* over to the outsider. "The Shipmasters met the other day—it's a few weeks old by now, I admit. But I thought it might interest you."

"The meeting is done and over by now, anyway. I'm a member, but I haven't had the chance of attending for five years, and I don't care much about it when I am ashore. One gets detached from these things. That's one of the inevitable results of being a sailor."

"What's the good of the Shipmasters?" said Amyas with nervous scorn. "I used to subscribe once—well, I do now if they want subscriptions. I'm not a member for the same reason that you are not a Reserve man—they are no good to me, and I've lost faith in them."

"You're too much of a blooming toff, old man!" amended Miles, laughing. "Our fellows think the Shipmasters low—too much of a trade union in it for them."

"I wish it were! The Engineers have societies and combinations that mean solid strength, and look at their position in consequence. Can you fancy us combinin'?"

All D'Arcy's hearers laughed—without bitterness, because the subject was so long since hopeless. The Masters of the sea have seen their authority and ancient rights taken from them bit by bit, until there is hardly a Line where the Company's agent in any little port cannot bully the Captain of the smartest Liner afloat. But they have never been able to combine to help themselves. The seas divide them, and their different routes keep them apart, so that Liverpool and Southampton and London have their separate "local centres," but the profession is split up and goes unrepresented. Furthermore, flesh and blood is cheap, even when trained and stored with the peculiar knowledge required by the Service, and competition proves that ships are few and men many. The Officers of the Mercantile Marine distrust each other, and are goaded by a pathetic anxiety for the wives and families behind them. The welfare of the whole profession is but a small thing against the drawbacks of the few who are near and dear to them—they are afraid, and the owners know it.

"You believe in the education craze, don't you?" said the outsider gloomily to Amyas. "I've heard your views quoted. Improve the men, and the better position must follow."

"I used to." Amyas shrugged his shoulders. "What does it all matter? The Masters won't help themselves, and no one can help them. The trainin' ships will turn out a few decent Officers every year, and—the pick will go to the Navy. We shall get the remainder in our profession, and be thankful."

"In our *profession?*" retorted Miles. "It isn't a profession, or a trade either, certain. It's nothing.

They describe us as 'carriers' by law—and they call us 'hotel-keepers' in derision. It's a 'calling,' I suppose,—that's a safe word—'the calling of the sea'! We have got as much rank as we have authority, and less future than either."

"'But when it comes to fightin', Lord!
They'll shove us in the stalls!'"

hummed Jack. "It's no use talking—we're under the Board of Trade, not the Admiralty."

And there was a brief silence full of the helplessness of things.

"Well, I wish you joy of your great man, and such a successful voyage as shall run you up the promotion ladder!" said the outsider, as Amyas rose at last, saying he had to get back on board.

"Thanks, old man! I don't look to follow Corry on the *Queen* yet awhile though."

"Your firm are always building. The last ship is barely launched."

"But no doubt she is already bespoken," said Amyas coolly, turning on his heel. His step-brother rose as a matter of course and followed him, a few paces behind, so that he had the grotesque appearance of a dog at heel. But it was on the figure of the older man that the eyes of the two men left behind rested, as he strolled down into the coffee-room, and out through the hotel.

"Say what any one will, that is the future Captain of the *Princess!*" said Miles thoughtfully. "It may be a scandal in the Company, but I am as sure of it as if I saw the Directors' letter."

"I should say it would be impossible to lift him over

the heads of so many others, unless there's a lot of undue influence at work," said the outsider decidedly.

"Ah!" said Miles, taking a well-worn briar out of his pocket and slowly packing the tobacco into it. His blunt fingers tucked in the least strand of the weed with a nicety which seemed impossible from their appearance. "But you don't know Savernakes'. Your Line mightn't, ours might."

D'Arcy took the great man round to Cape Town, and that personage was very well pleased with his trip, and went about saying that Amyas was a good fellow and delightful to sail with. Which naturally enough did him no harm. While in harbour D'Arcy employed himself in entertaining on board, and finished up by inviting the Officers of the flag-ship then at Simon's Town to lunch with himself and his own staff. The *Beatrice* men came, and filled a long table with their dark-blue figures and pleasant bronzed faces. Sitting at the head of his own table, entertaining on his own ship, D'Arcy thought of anotner Captain Amyas who had belonged to that very Service which he was outside for ever, and a pang went through him at the sight of the double gold braid with the curl on the cuff —the anchor amidst the oak-leaves on the caps lying on a further table, in place of a Company badge—the forbidden buttons—all the little differences which culminated in the empty sword-belts. He had accomplished his own boyish ambition,—to be Captain Amyas on a Liner, and that such a one as his father should admire—but he was outside the pale of his father's traditions all the same. He could never touch that *esprit-de-corps* of the Royal Navy which with his fatal intuition he surmised; he was a Merchant-

man—Master, and not Captain, for all the courtesy title—and coarsened and hardened by experiences of which these men, with all their training, knew nothing. He saw the difference between himself and them in every clean line of the strong self-restrained faces. Splendid fellows these Naval men, silent and resourceful, gentlemen born and bred. Well, his had been a rough life!—rougher than his old father's, for all his weather-beaten appearance. So he mused inwardly, chatting with the Flag-Captain meanwhile, a splendid figure enough himself, in his own costly uniform.

The *Duchess* was by no means full when she sailed out of Cape Town Docks, but she had a greater number of passengers than would probably have fallen to the lot of any other Captain of the Line. Amyas knew his own popularity, and to a certain extent it pleased him. He was ambitious in his own groove, and exerted himself to the scope that his life allowed him, without recognizing that the *kudos* that he gained was, after all, superficial. He was a man who thought a good deal too, and knew the theory of his profession as well as the actual experience of every day and its duties—an experience which differed materially from all theories, as he had found long ago. In by-gone watches under tropic stars, when the ship was going steadily, he had thought out and set in order many opinions gathered at his own and other men's cost, and since he had been a Master he had put them into form and once or twice had seen them in print. He was, however, rather diffident of his own powers in this line, and few people knew of his achievement. Had he been bolder he could probably have commanded a larger public, but the

very intuition and quickness of perception which had enabled him to grasp the weak points of his "calling," as Miles had styled it, had also shown him the hopelessness of endeavouring to influence the majority of his fellows. "All we like sheep have gone astray!" is the anthem of the Merchant Service, and the owners pray that their servants may long retain the flock-like quality which forbids the combination of which Amyas had spoken. He was amongst a minority who would have helped his Service if he could, being free from the handicap of a wife and family; but he saw, with his fatal clear-sightedness, that his fellows would not be grateful. Therefore he kept his achievements in the background, and wrote merely for the necessity that was sometimes in him.

Long ago Lady Arthur Hyde had called him a literary man by instinct; possibly she was wide of the mark, but she had judged rightly in discerning a certain jumble of artistic qualities in Amyas. Perhaps it was more a taste for the arts, and an appreciation of them, than an absolute talent, but the inheritance undoubtedly came from his mother and had a glint of genius. Ruby Lyston had bequeathed the enthusiasms of her nature to her son—perhaps also some of the self-indulgence and weakness of the "artistic temperament," the avowed possession of which is almost always the excuse for the baser instincts. D'Arcy's mother was the first woman who played him false by weakening her own character, the which reappeared in him to be assailed by temptations she had never known. D'Arcy himself had never lost his taste for drawing; he kept a private log, and a still more private memorandum book, and both were

illustrated—the former with sketches of anything he saw or heard that struck him as more explanatory than mere words, the latter with likenesses of the people he met in his comings and goings round the world. There was naturally a preponderance of women, but the sketches were clever enough to have delighted a connoisseur had one ever got hold of the book.

It chanced that the *Duchess* left Table Bay in the teeth of a nor'-west gale that was exceptional even for the time of year. There was a sea running that would have made a more cautious man remain in shelter until the hardest had blown over; but Amyas had a dislike of being thwarted by the elements which he had spent his life in learning to circumvent. The *Duchess* left harbour at the hour advertised, though by the time she reached Robben Island she was shipping seas that drove every one from the decks. The comfort of the passengers in a boat of her class was not, however, materially altered by having to get below. The smoking-room was aft, and still available; and the ladies on board dived into their trunks, with the result that the saloon was unusually decorative that night in spite of the fiddles on the tables.

Amyas was present at the beginning of dinner; it was a custom of his to start the meal, though he usually slipped away after the first course to look after his ship. His presence was intangibly reassuring to his passengers, and as he rallied this one or that on being a poor sailor, or exerted himself to distract their thoughts from the rough weather, there was insensibly a quicker note in the conversation—a

fillip to the social atmosphere. The soup had gone round, with many jokes as to its dangers, and narrow escapes from unwelcome immersions, and the Captain was telling an anecdote of a former voyage and a new steward.

"The fellow hadn't got his sea-legs, and, by Jove! he drenched three ladies with Julien before he gave it up as a bad job. There would come a sudden lurch, and then——"

He stopped suddenly, for it seemed as if the ship had given a practical illustration of his words. There was indeed a lurch—something else, too—a crash from the engine-room, and a jarring vibration so distinctly different to the former pitching of the ship that there was instant silence. The talk throughout the saloon ceased as if every one had been stricken dumb; there was a flicker of movement down the rows of chairs, but it died, and the occupants sat still again, with asking faces turned to the head of the table.

Amyas had risen quietly and left the saloon when the vibration had hardly ceased. It lasted about five seconds—five awful seconds to those who could surmise nothing, bad enough for the Master who knew, as the vibration ceased and the ship began to roll heavily, that she had swung broadside on to the sea then running. When he reached the deck he paused for a second to draw his breath. The old sickening fear was clawing at his heart and making him gasp; the next instant it had passed, and his nerves were strung like steel. He hoped he had not changed colour, for some one might have noticed it.

Down below among the engines the blow had

been hardly less sudden or comprehensible. By an inter-r-r-position of Providence, the Chief Engineer always said, he had come down into the engine-room to speak to his Second, when he should have snatched a few minutes to get something to eat. The two men had met on the starting platform, but before they had time to exchange a word there came that terrific *craunch* and jar which had startled the saloon. If it was audible above, it was much more noticeable here so near the scene of the accident, and by natural instinct the two men sprang forward without losing a moment, the Chief shutting the throttle, while the Second handled the reversing gear. The presence of both men on that particular spot at the moment was a freak of fortune that probably saved the ship, for had they been further off they might have been just too late; even as it was the way on the ship and the momentum of the machinery carried the shaft round in a few more crashing, jarring revolutions. The *Duchess* was a small ship, comparatively speaking—some 4,300 tons only—and her gear was more easily manipulated than if she had been one of the giants of the Line; the damage was bad enough as it was, but a further delay in stopping the engines would have led to consequences which none of the men present cared to think about. The fourth Engineer had joined his two superiors as soon as he could get there, but there had been no time to exchange more than a few hurried words—the briefest orders as to water-tight doors, etc., as soon as the Chief saw that the engines had stopped, and then while one man stayed to shut up the valves, the others made a rush for the shaft tunnel. It did not

take a practised eye long to discover what had happened, and by the time that Amyas was out of the saloon, his Chief Engineer was coming up on deck to report to him, leaving his subordinates to oppose the rush of water which threatened to flood the tunnel.

They met at the door of the engine-room—that palpitating section of the ship where her heart seemed to be, and which was as silent now as though it had ceased to beat.

"What's the matter?" said Amyas hoarsely.

"Stern shaft gone, sir—gone in the stern tube," gasped the Engineer. "We can't get at it!"

"D'you mean that it's out of reach? Can't you get at it to mend it—patch it up somehow?"

"Mend it! We shall be damned glad to shore it up and keep the water out. It's nearly torn the sides out of her at the stern, and the water was pouring in. We can shut the tunnel water-tight door, but I should like to shore it and wedge it up a bit first."

A strong Scotch accent did not make the Engineer more understandable when agitated, but the burring syllables were only too plain in the meaning they conveyed to D'Arcy.

"We're some hours out from Cape Town," he said. "I shall sail her in."

The Scotchman looked dubious. Engines were his religion, and he looked on sails as a heathen creed. "Well, sir," he said, "let me have a good try to secure the shaft before you get any way on the ship. The propeller must not turn if we can help it."

"Very well," said Amyas shortly. "I'll send you

down Chips and some scantling and hands to help you. Let me know when you are through."

He turned away, leaving the masters of the engines to finish their work before he began his. The decision to sail had been a sudden one which his overwrought brain seemed to beat out and grasp before he could have conceived it under ordinary circumstances; but unless he could get a tow he became more and more convinced that immediate action of some sort was necessary. The engineers had got to work with the fervour of their professional instinct. By the aid of shores and screw-jacks against the coupling-bolts the shaft was secured; but the chief difficulty was to stop the rush of water through the broken stern gland. The proverbial nigger, however, does not work like the men who were in charge of the *Duchess*' engines, and in a few hours a coffer-dam of wood, bricks, cement, and any material that was available (they would have taken the tin-ware from the galley, and broken up the passengers' trunks had they been allowed), was built up round the stern gland, and the Chief Engineer, streaked like a zebra, stood back and regarded his finished work with the eye of a creator. He was caked with dirt and sweat, for he had worked side by side with his men, after the manner of his class, who say simply that if a thing is to be well done you must not hesitate to do it yourself; but he was proud of his coffer-dam (amongst the materials of which were a good many imprecatory "Damns!" from his boys), and was ready to vouch that the bricks and boards and stuffing which he had used as a barricade would resist the water until the ship was safely in dry dock, though he would have been happier with

twenty-four hours' more hard work and a splice in the shaft. Those under him, however, drew a long breath of relief when he reported to the Captain, who had bound him down to the shortest time in which the work could be accomplished safely; but for some time afterwards he was seen disconsolately wandering amongst his quiet engines, looking with the eye of a parent to see if the jar of the breakage had displaced or strained anything of the delicate constitution of his beloved eccentrics. He was jealous for every denizen in his domain, from his great jacketed cylinders and thrust-blocks, to the split-pin of his counter-rod; but thanks to his own promptness in shutting off steam his darlings had escaped. It was the frame of the ship which had suffered—a sore enough point with him as things were; so had the shaft, and he felt in the position of a general with plenty of ammunition and guns at his disposal—but the latter were spiked. His engines were untouched, ready for their duty, which was to turn the shaft . . . and that was broken!

But the engineer's necessity is the sailor's opportunity. Perhaps from old association, or the belief in real seamanship which lingers long in the minds of men trained out of steamers, Amyas had always been particular to have his sails properly bent and fit for setting. The foreyard on the *Duchess* was ninety-seven feet long, and carried topsail and foresail in proportion; with these, and the foretopmast-stay-sail, he meant to see what could be done, though the drag of the still propeller was a drawback. When he got back on the bridge after speaking to the Engineer he was met by his Chief Officer, who explained that, knowing by the vibration that the shaft had gone, he

had put the helm hard to starboard, in order to turn the ship's head to sea, and away from land; his suggestion was that, as the ship was in danger of drifting on to a lee shore, they should endeavour to anchor, and await rescue by a passing boat.

"There must be plenty, one would think, in these latitudes," he remarked dryly.

"What, in this weather?" said Amyas significantly. He had listened quietly, as his custom was; but while taking the opinion of other men, he had a habit of forming and sticking to his own. "The engineers say that the mischief is in the stern tube—no chance of patchin' her up, or, unfortunately, of uncouplin' the shaft, which would help us. But I have made up my mind to sail the ship by shortest route to Table Bay, and I'll take the chances as they come."

"I don't see how we are to get her before the wind, sir," remonstrated the Chief Officer, as dubiously as the Engineer had done. "It's a risky operation seeing that we are running for a dead lee shore!"

"It is my risk anyhow," said D'Arcy, and his face fell into the old lines with which he faced a difficulty in the way of his desire. "You can do as you are told. Send your men aloft with instructions to cut the gaskets of the topsail and foresail directly you give them the order, and get every man on the ship stationed, when the time comes, to set those sails smartly."

"We haven't enough men to do it, sir!"

"The passengers must help," said Amyas coolly. "They can pull on a rope, if they don't understand why. Before you send your men to stations, Mr. Cartright, pass the biggest wire hawser you have from

aft for'ard, and make it fast to your starboard cable; then unshackle from the anchor, and tell the carpenter to go below into the chain locker and unshackle the chain at the thirty-fathom shackle. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir." Mr. Cartright understood one thing—that argument was wasted, and perhaps slightly dangerous. He wished himself well out of the *Duchess* and under a man less given to experiments in trusting to his own judgment! But he felt a perfectly new respect for Amyas as he turned away to carry out his orders; his contempt for his private character had threatened to obscure his view of him as a sailor, but he recognized the nervous strength of the Shipmaster whose confidence in himself could rise to sudden heights of this sort.

"When you have done all that you can, let me know," said D'Arcy quietly, and that surprised Cartright more than anything. "He was as deuced composed as if he were giving an order in harbour!" he said, when speaking of it afterwards.

It was no light task that D'Arcy had set him and the crew. The ship was rolling heavily in the trough of the seas, and the water was sweeping her from one end to the other; but at the end of an hour Cartright came on the bridge again with the information that the hawser was fast for'ard and the chain ready for slipping.

"Send your men aloft then, as soon as the engineers report that they can do no more," said Amyas. "Have you given the others their stations?"

"Every man," said the Chief Officer with a wrinkle in his brow. "The passengers have turned to with a

will—I think they look on it as rather a godsend of an adventure!"

"I hope they won't find it too much of an adventure to keep their feet!" said Amyas grimly. "The decks are like a greased board."

As soon as the shaft was secured the order was given to slip the cable, and the thirty fathoms of chain at the end of one hundred and twenty of wire hawser dragging on the bottom, with the aid of the foretopmast-staysail, gradually helped the ship's head to pay off; round—round she went, while the men stood tensely at their stations, the volunteers slipping as the wet decks rolled beneath them exactly as Amyas had feared. The passengers tried to get foothold at their unaccustomed task, while it seemed to them as if the ship were loath to obey those guiding her, so long she kept them at stretch, both body and brain. Then, as by some mysterious process it seemed, the wind drew aft, and the order was given to cut the gaskets and set the foresail and foretopsail. There is something almost like witchcraft to the lay mind in watching the handling of a big ship. The men who had been pressed into the service hauled on the ropes put into their hands with some outline in their minds as to the result; but the clanging of orders through the wind, the heave of the ship as she bestirred herself like a human thing to the urgent wish of her commander, seemed something more than commonplace. When she began to gather steerage way the hawser and cable were slipped, but the propeller still dragged her back and delayed her progress, as it could not turn in the water. Still the men worked to help the ship, above

and below; the broken shaft was in the position of a splintered bone, and the engineers, as doctors, had made it their business to prevent the bone from tearing worse wounds in the ship's frame; had the broken shaft continued that wrenching movement which caused the vibration after the accident, the sides of the ship must have been torn open at the stern exactly as a splintered bone works through flesh. They had shut off steam and put the reversing gear in motion none too soon; as it was, the *Duchess* had a crippled appearance as her sails dragged her through the water; she was making four knots an hour at best, the weather was thick with drizzling rain, but "in the face of clenched antagonisms" Captain Amyas was steering direct for Robben Island. It loomed up at last right ahead, a sullen grey line of coast, and for a space the Master hesitated as to which passage to take. Inside or outside? The inside was nearer, but then it was more leewardly, and there were those lives in his keeping which he knew in his soul he had chosen to risk because he could trust his own knowledge! The long strain was telling on D'Arcy's nerves, though the worst of the journey was over; he chose the inner passage, and as the ship's head was got in the right direction the weather began to clear and the wind came out from the sou'-west. It was blowing hard, but it enabled them to get the main and mizzen trysails set, and a greater control of the ship. The speed was improved too, and without further mishap she swung round the end of the breakwater, and the anchor was let go in smooth water. But the winds had their spite on the man who had baulked them after all, for as the canvas

was being got in there came a squall like a child's burst of rage at its own impotence, and the sails which had stood D'Arcy Amyas in such good stead were carried away in flying fragments.

"Just about too late!" said D'Arcy, laughing. He was satisfied to have accomplished his boast and brought his ship into Table Bay. The winds were but as children to his man's cunning.

The story flew round the docks, and Savernakes' agent came through from Durban and went on board to learn the truth and cable it home. The *Duchess* had broken down three hours from Cape Town, and Captain Amyas had sailed her back, accepting the risks consequent on the gale then blowing and the boat's disabled condition. There was a supper on board that night, for the passengers, now that the danger was over, were eager to lionize the man who had brought them safely back to port, and drank his health in champagne that flowed like water.

"It seems to me, Captain Amyas," the agent ventured to say, "that you ran great risks!"

"It seems to me that I know my business better than any landsman can know it!" Amyas replied coolly. "And if I'm Master of a steamer, I'm also a seaman."

And the voice of criticism was silenced.

CHAPTER XI

"Who cares? I'll make a clean breast once for all!
Besides, you've heard the gossip. My life long
I've been a woman-liker—liking means
Loving and so on. There's a lengthy list
By this time I shall have to answer for—
So say the good folk: and they don't guess half."
ROBERT BROWNING.

"HANSOM!" said Mr. Savernake.

The cab drew up at the kerb outside the great shipping office, and the gentleman got in. He looked singularly immaculate for a business man in the City, but the destination he gave his driver was not the West End—it was Waterloo. As the hansom wound in and out from Aldgate, Strandwards, and he leaned back and looked absently at the stream of vehicles and foot passengers passing him, his clean-cut face was very deep in thought.

At Waterloo he made his way to the far side where a special for Southampton waited, and there on the platform he spotted a group whose attire was as his own. There were perhaps half-a-dozen men and three ladies, and the latter were women whose position in Society was by no means insignificant. Savernake raised his hat, and one of the men hailed him.

"Ha, Savernake! Going down to the luncheon?"

"Yes." Mr. Savernake nodded and shook hands

with a pretty, fair woman in palest grey. "I am glad you are going to honour us, Lady Buckminster."

"Oh, I love a 'maiden-voyage' luncheon! I would not miss it for worlds. And your boats are such beauties! I am looking forward to seeing her. What is she called?"

"The *Princess*. I hope you will travel in her some day."

"I should be charmed. Oh yes, Lord Buckminster must certainly take me out for a trip. Every one goes to Africa now-a-days, don't they?"

"Fortunately for us!"

"And I hear your Captain is such a charming man, and just a *leetle* bit naughty!"

"Where did you hear that, Lady Buckminster?"

"Eh? Oh, I don't know! Some one must have said it. But I'm quite looking forward to making his acquaintance. What is his name?"

"Captain Amyas. He is an excellent seaman, and I believe a gentleman. His father was in the Navy. For the rest, we will hope it is not as you say."

"Oh, but I don't hope anything of the sort! It makes it all so much more interesting." And the Countess of Buckminster picked up her dainty skirts and was handed into a first-class carriage of the waiting train.

The heat was almost tropical in Southampton, and summer blazed down on the Empress Dock where the new ship was berthed. Even in the cramping quarters of the dock she was beautiful to look upon, spick and span from stem to stern, and every noble line of her a masterpiece of the great firm who had

built her for Savernakes'. She was fine-drawn as a yacht, but just as powerful as if her bows had bulged in the hideous Belfast fashion, and her four funnels had the slight "raking aft" appearance, even when she was at rest, that gave an impression of going full steam ahead. On board her law and order kept watch over the festivities of the day, and the arrangements for the entertainment of the guests seemed to go on oiled wheels. There were masses of hothouse flowers banked down the long tables, and the saloon was decorated, and the champagne was unlimited, for the *Princess* would start on her first voyage at four o'clock that day. By special arrangement the passengers who were brought down by the usual mail train were lunched at the Sou'-Western, and did not come on board until three o'clock; for until that time the new boat was to be kept sacred to the favoured few—in themselves a goodly number—who were invited to the "sending-off" luncheon.

Bernard Savernake, as he dropped into his seat, looked up the long table with keen interest at the man sitting at its head. There had been no chance for him to make his observations in the general confusion of greeting when the guests first came on board, but he had in his mind the picture of a slim, bare-legged boy, with rough hair and earnest eyes, and he wanted to compare it with the present development of that memory. What he saw was a big fair man in the Company's uniform, almost unrecognizable save for a curious narrowness at the corners of the eyes. Savernake looked at the burnt, bearded face—the close-cut yellow hair, which was smooth and glossy as the hide of some animal in perfect health—

the nervous features—and he seemed almost puzzled. Captain Amyas was so utterly altered, even from any hint of his boyhood, that Savernake felt unable to form an idea of his character. He was speaking to Lady Arthur Hyde, who was sitting on his right, and Mr. Savernake saw nothing in his expression but great respect and courtesy. "The fellow has rather pretty manners," he thought.

"It seems a long time since we meet," Amyas was saying.

"A very long time," Lady Arthur answered steadily. "You have risen in your profession."

"Through the favour of my patron saint!"

"Do you worship fickle fortune?"

"I have a private shrine where I lay offerings, Lady Arthur. But it is too sacred for public mention!"

Lady Arthur lifted her glass and drank a silent toast. "I have wished you luck!" she said.

"Then I go out with the certainty of a successful trip!" he said, smiling.

Later on the Captain was called upon to answer a toast. Savernake saw him rise, and leaned back in his chair. He did not expect this Lothario of the seas to be nervous, and the speech did not interest him. The first few words were slightly slurred as if the speaker were getting his energies together. Then a sentence rose louder in a soft hoarse tone of deeper feeling.

"—and to any one knowin' the seas——" said D'Arcy.

Mr. Savernake sat up, his face galvanized into interest. The little boy in the fisherman's jersey was

before him again, speaking with this same soft choked accent as the bearded man at the head of the table. Voices do not lie if they have any distinguishing quality; they retain it as mouths do their curves—but D'Arcy's mouth was hidden.

"I wonder," said Mr. Savernake to himself, "whether he still wants things '*so much*,' and if he obtains them, and who suffers?"

The guests went the round of the ship after lunch, as was inevitable. D'Arcy was host, but the Directors knew as much of the obvious points of the *Princess* as he, and took some of the personal explanations off his shoulders. For a moment he found himself alone, in his own cabin, with Lady Arthur Hyde. They stood looking into each other's eyes in the shaded space, while the sunlight danced on the decks outside.

"I should hardly have known you!" she breathed.

"I should have known *you*—anywhere!" he answered. "You will never change."

"Nonsense! It is fifteen years. I am an old woman."

"You are my good angel, and I believe you always will be!" he said, stretching out his hands to her. She laid her own soft palms in them lightly, and looked at him with eyes which were half tender, half regretful.

"How you have broadened—and how a beard alters you! I see hardly anything of the boy I knew. I wonder why I have never forgotten you?"

"No merit of my own, I am afraid."

"Something—I never knew what—made me tender to you always, even in memory, all these years. Captain Amyas——"

"It used to be D'Arcy!"

"Ah! but not to this big important person, in charge of our largest ship!" She laid her hand lightly on the gold lace on his sleeve. If Savernakes' uniform had a fault it was the preponderance of gold lace, but few denied that it was becoming.

"I have heard stories of you!" she said. "Not your prowess—I don't mean that. I was proud of you then!"

"What were the stories about?"

"Hardly stories perhaps—hints. You are too fond of women's society!"

He hesitated an instant, searching her face. Here was a subtle danger with which it took all his skill to cope. She was looking down, and he could study her at leisure. A grey thread in her brown hair was perhaps discernible, an added line round her mouth and eyes—but her beauty seemed immortal for all that.

"Do you wish me to justify myself?" he said. "I have no excuses to make—I wish for none. You know where my heart lies!"

She flashed up at him under her dark lashes. The look asked a question, probed him, betrayed her little vulnerable point.

"As long as you miss your heart your good angel is likely to take good care of it—and you!" she said tremulously. Then she added softly, "As a woman may!"

"As a woman has done!" he said, stooping to kiss her hand daintily. "Lady Arthur——"

"It used to be Clare!"

"It always is—in my heart! I want to know,

would it be possible for you to sail with me again? Ah, do!"

"I don't know—I do not like to say. I will acknowledge that I should perhaps—like it! Hush, there is some one coming! How long it seems since we had a talk together!"

"Ah! those moonlight nights in the tropics, the wind hardly stirrin' the curtain over our doorway, and your head on my——"

"I have no more to say," she interrupted hurriedly, "except what I have practically said. I am true to those who are true to me!"

She stepped out of the cabin and joined the other guests, D'Arcy following. Her smile was the sweetest, her laugh the least disturbed, of the whole party. Mr. Savernake thought that the Captain seemed a little abstracted as he took Lord Arthur Hyde and himself up on to the bridge, and talked of the boat's beauties and virtues.

"It is a fortunate thing that I have no desire or intention to marry," thought D'Arcy Amyas. "However established one's position, it is never safe to quarrel with a clever woman who has power in her hands!"

"I am exceedingly glad to see you Master of this ship, Captain Amyas," said Lord Arthur, fumbling after an elusive glass to fix it in his eye. "Exceedingly glad! There was some talk of—of another name, as you may have heard. I do not mind telling you that I should have been quite put out if the Directors had not agreed with me that a man who had proved himself as capable as yourself in the face of danger was the right one on this bridge!"

D'Arcy did know that his appointment had hung in the balance—he knew too the man he had displaced. The whole Company had hummed when he was given the *Princess* over the heads of his seniors, and he knew it. Furthermore, he did not care. Things would settle down later. He might be hated, but no hatred could deny his proven powers, and—he knew that Lord Arthur would be moulded into really thinking of him as he had just spoken, and that the most influential men on board would stand his friends. He thanked the Chairman suitably and well—neither too much nor too little. And Bernard Savernake stood by and heard it all.

"I wonder if you remember me, Captain Amyas?" he said after a time, fixing his shrewd grey eyes on the Master's face. "I am growing an old man, and the last time I saw you, you were a little boy."

"I am not likely to forget my father's old friend, Mr. Savernake," Amyas responded. He smiled as he spoke, and a network of wrinkles gathered round his eyes—wrinkles worn not by time, but by facing hard weather and staring straight ahead from the bridges of many boats. Under the peak of his cap his eyes looked sinister from their peculiar setting, though he spoke in all sincerity.

"I dare say you do not cherish the memory," said Savernake, laughing. "If I recollect rightly I was doing my best to persuade your father to keep you off the sea, and you regarded me as an arch-enemy."

"You thought it a hard life, I don't doubt, in the which you knew more than I."

"But," said Savernake curiously, "you are glad on the whole that my well-meant advice was wasted?"

D'Arcy's eyes wandered down the length of the ship, between the new steel boats and the white ventilators, to the dwindling stern where the blue ensign flew. A length of some two hundred feet stretched below him, where he stood on the flying-bridge, and his foot pressed the planks with an odd thrill—that sense of mysterious communion with his ship which had haunted him from the old days of his first watches on the *Mistress*. He turned to Savernake coolly.

"It is hardly likely that I should regret standing as Captain on the bridge of such a boat, Mr. Savernake!"

"Good!" said that gentleman frankly. "I offer you my most hearty congratulations on that score. But between the boy who pitted his influence against mine, and the man who is Master of this boat, there stretches a lifetime of experience, Captain Amyas!"

"Yes," D'Arcy acknowledged quietly.

"That it must have been a hard experience I know from my own knowledge of the Service, theoretical only though it is. The responsibility of such a ship as this, for instance, is not a holiday task, I take it!"

"It means the care of some fifteen hundred lives as a rule, and perhaps half a million's worth of other people's property!"

"Ah! . . . And do you still sketch?" asked Mr. Savernake, with airy irrelevance.

"I can illustrate my log," said D'Arcy, laughing.

"I should like to possess that book. If I were a younger man I would say leave it to me in your will. It is on the whole an interesting profession, this you

were so determined to choose—whether illustrated or not."

"There is a lot to be learned. I spent one voyage among the engines, because I wanted to pass in steam. I doubt if you ever know all there is to know about a ship, and they all have different ways."

"H'm!" said Mr. Savernake, with his customary dryness. "You are making me look a fool for my prognostications and theories, Captain Amyas. I am keeping you from your guests—I see that Lord Arthur has already deserted us. But I reserve final judgment till the eleventh hour!" he added to himself as he followed D'Arcy slowly down to the promenade deck.

CHAPTER XII

"Nice while it lasted, and now it is over—
Tear our your 'eart an' good-bye to your lover!
What's the use o' grievin', when the mother that bore you
(Mary, pity women!) knew it all before you?"
RUDYARD KIPLING.

By courtesy the *Queen* was known as the flag-ship of Savernakes' fleet, and Captain Corry—the "parson" Captain—was Commodore. The *Queen* was the same tonnage, or nearly, as the *Princess*, but the latter had many trifling improvements on the older boat, and was on the whole far more popular. Captain Amyas ran her to and fro with steady success, and though criticism as to his personal character certainly grew as time went on, he and the four Officers under him were acknowledged as smart men, and his boat's reputation was at least as fast literally as morally.

It was some five years after the luncheon before her maiden voyage that Amyas was standing in the smoking-room of Kelway's at Southampton, talking to Captain Ronny, when he heard himself addressed by name. It was one of the freaks of Fate that he should be that day in the queer little room where he had first met the older man. It was not often that they consorted thither, for Ronny loved the flesh-pots of Egypt, and the lounge at the Sou'-Western appealed to him more than the closer quarters at Kelway's. But it chanced that day that the great

hotel was full of Americans, the International's mail boat starting on the morrow, and Ronny and Amyas could not find a corner wherein to exchange confidences.

"Come over to Kelway's," Ronny said impatiently. "It's empty at this time of day, and there is so much d——d cackle here that I can't hear myself speak!"

"The *St. Louis* will be full," said Amyas briefly, as they crossed the road into Queen's Park. It was a voyage or so since he had seen Captain Ronny, and there was all the gossip of the shore and sea to exchange. The swing glass doors closed behind them, and they made their way without interruption past the bar, down the steps, and short to their left. The smoking-room of Kelway's had not changed much since Amyas tried to light his pipe there years since, and Ronny had noted the tell-tale shaking of his hand with his keen, merry eyes. There was a piano across one corner, but the sun on the skylight showed the same aspect as in the good old days when the men of the Southampton Lines were reported to play cards at Kelway's till two in the morning, and go aboard with empty pockets.

Amyas had not noticed that there was another occupant in the dusk of the further corner, but as he walked up to the familiar mantelpiece he heard his name. Turning to see who had spoken he became aware of a rugged-faced man in a pilot coat, who seemed hardly at his ease, for he cleared his throat once or twice and spoke hoarsely.

"It *is* D'Arcy Amyas, ain't it?"

"Yes." D'Arcy turned right round, staring at his interlocutor with a puzzled lack of recognition.

"I want to ask a favour of you!" said the man bluntly. "My name's Benson. I shipped with you a matter of eighteen years back on the *Mistress*, when you were a 'prentice."

"Benson! Granfer'! Of course it is!" said D'Arcy, holding out his hand cordially. "Captain Ronny, this is an old shipmate of mine. He taught me how to splice as I never learned on the trainin' ship, and to bend sails. And, by Jove! didn't I get licked if I funked it at the main royal!"

Benson's grim face relaxed a little. He smiled in a sidelong fashion, as if it were an unusual practice with him and the muscles were stiff with disuse.

"I dare say I roped it into you a bit!" he said. "You've gone over my head since then though."

"Ah, but you deserted our firm!" said D'Arcy lightly. "Promotion was too slow for you. What are you doin' now, Benson?"

"I'm Master of a tramp. She's a big boat and a steamer. We ply between here and Sydney. You've got Savernakes' big boat, haven't you?"

"One of the big ones. The *Princess*."

"Well, what I want to ask is this. I've a little girl just leaving school, and she's going out to her aunt at Bulawayo, up country. Now we don't touch Africa this trip, and even if we did I wouldn't like Cherry to rough it on the *Seagull*. I want you to take her out in your care—I mean her to go like any of the greatest ladies, and so I'm choosing Savernakes' best boat. They're very generous to me, and she's going first-class for second-class fare."

"All right," said D'Arcy, with careless good-nature.

"Send her on board on Saturday, and we'll look after her. I'll speak to the stewardess."

He did not give the matter any special attention, even when, on Benson taking his ungainly figure out of the room, Captain Ronny began to joke him about his charge.

"Got a nice little girl to look after this trip, eh, D'Arcy!" he said, with his hearty laugh. Captain Ronny was getting very grey, but his eyes danced with the devil's own mischief still, and his voice boomed like a full, sound bell. "Gad! I remember when I used to have girls sent me to travel 'in the care of the Captain.' What ripping runs they were! I wish I could have my life over again, but every Skipper thinks that no one could have such a time as he had!"

"I don't have many young ladies confided to my care!" remarked Captain Amyas dryly.

"No, you're getting too well known, from Southampton docks to Madagascar. You're a worse fellow than I was, D'Arcy!" said Captain Ronny, with huge enjoyment. "No woman was really the worse for me—unless she asked for it!"

"You've given me a very bad character!"

"I'll leave the little girl you are taking out to cap it. Treat her well, you scoundrel!"

"I shall probably leave her to play with the engineers. We've got three nice boys goin' with us from last trip. I shall tell Stewart to keep them in order though. I wonder if she'll be like old Benson—if so there won't be any trouble over her. Did you ever see such a face? It looks like a figure-head that's been to Davy Jones and come back again."

"He may be a decent Skipper for all that. He looked to me like a rough-and-tumble customer if you didn't get on the weather side of him. I expect he dotes on this daughter—the roughest blackguards always do."

"It's nothing to me if he dotes or not," said Amyas indifferently. "I'm not likely to worry myself over a little school-girl of that class."

"Lucky you qualified it!" chuckled Captain Ronny. "You're just the age to sicken of older women a little, and take up with girls. I had a sweetheart of fifteen when I was near on forty!"

"You seem to have varied it from year to year!" said D'Arcy, as he lit another pipe.

"I've had my time, and it's been a good one, thanks to the women!" said Ronny, with the frank shamelessness of a pagan. "I recollect once a lady of title (I won't mention names, for she's well known) sailing with me, she was going to India to join her husband. I had only spoken to her three or four times, when just after we left Marseilles one night I was wakened by a candle being flashed into my eyes. There was the lady—in her dressing-gown .... I thought that a pretty stiff invitation, I must own. She was a handsome woman too." His tone beamed with reminiscence.

"No need to say that you accepted it!" sneered Amyas. "I can recollect one girl who would come and share my watch when I was second Mate. She used to walk up on the bridge as cool as brass, at two o'clock in the morning, with some sort of wrap over her bed-gear. We were in the tropics, and she perched herself up on the rail and talked to me, and

I was beggin' her to go back to bed, for I was with Corry that voyage, and if he had caught us nothin' would have made him believe that it wasn't my fault. He didn't see the force of a double watch that he didn't set himself!"

"He knew too much of you! I don't suppose you had any objection to company, eh? Come along home and have some supper. Bessie will be thinking that you've got me into mischief if we are late!" He chuckled at his own humour, and his eyes were two twinkling points of strong colour. Captain Ronny had by no means done with youth because his hair was white, and what had amused and attracted him at twenty did so still at sixty-five.

D'Arcy Amyas had been introduced to Mrs. Ronny so long since that she had become reconciled to him, although she told him sharply her opinion of him and Merchantmen in general. When first he had met her, D'Arcy had been surprised to find her rather a pretty woman, many years younger than her husband, but still not young, with a shrewish tongue. She ran him over with her sharp dark eyes, and greeted him characteristically—

"How are you, Mr. Amyas? I know you must be a bad man if you're a friend of Joe's. But there, don't protest—you are all alike. I dare say you won't get any better as you get older!"

D'Arcy had been rather taken aback, the more so as his quiet, deferential manner never blinded her to his probable behaviour out of her presence. But though he recognized that Mrs. Ronny saw through him, he generally spent his time when on shore at their house at Portswood, having no home of his own.

He thought no more of Miss Benson—he did not even know that she had come on board indeed, until they were some days out. It was after the *Princess* had passed Madeira that she was recalled to his mind.

There was among the passengers a little stunted, crooked Author, a man with a deformed person's face and a mind as twisted as his body. Amyas had met his strange searching gaze once or twice, and had shrunk from it with a feeling of aversion. The little man used to listen while the Captain talked, and then laugh horribly in a silent fashion of his own. On the day in question Amyas was in his cabin after luncheon, when there came a tap at the door, and the little Author entered.

"It struck me that you might like to see this book," he said, putting a slim paper-covered thing on the table. "You were talking about modern poetry with Lady Blaze just now—if you haven't read the verses they may appeal to you."

He grinned widely, swung round on his heel as if it caused him some difficulty to turn like other men, and went away, leaving Amyas looking suspiciously at the thin volume.

He thought, naturally enough, that it was his strange visitor's own ; but was reassured by the title, *Admirals All!* Henry Newbolt. It struck him that it must have been offered to him on account of its naval flavour, and he opened it rather listlessly where the pages fell apart. His eye lit on two lines—

"Drake, he was a Devon man, an' rüled the Devon seas—
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)"

D'Arcy's hands tightened on the book; he sat up and read "Drake's Drum" through, and then he went back and read it again slowly, his eyes dreamy and his face absorbed on the printed page.

"Drake, he was a Devon man, an' rüled the Devon seas—
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Rovin' tho' his death fell, he went wi' heart at ease,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
'Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore,
Strike et when your powder's runnin' low;
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven,
An' drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago!'"

His blood beat along his veins, and his breath came quickly. Once more he was a boy with the haunting memories of Drake in the very air he breathed—Drake who loved Devon, and spoke with the county accent!

"If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven!"

It clanged like the sword wrenched out of the scabbard. The old memories that he had steadily crushed down for fifteen years, turning his eyes to foreign lands from the familiar aspect of Trawles, rose up out of their graves, triumphant, merciless. There was not one of those far-away lands with which he had forced himself into familiarity that lay half so sharply defined on his mind as the background the verses called up. He ground his teeth and cursed the little stunted Author with the mocking face who had probed his weakness so well in some devilish fashion of his own, that he had known how to flay him mentally.

Yet the witchery was too strong to be resisted.

The studied comfort of his cabin faded before his eyes—the heave of the deck against the broken blue outside his half-drawn curtain—the sound of eight bells striking clearly—they all faded, rolled back on the ebbing tide of the present. He was back in Devonshire again, climbing up through a breakneck lane between red fields, with banks where the green fern clung to the wet earth. Somewhere out of sight was the sound of Trawles Water dropping down and down from the hills, until it came in sight, a foaming, churning waterfall tumbled over rough rocks, and leaped into the head of Trawles Valley, cutting the village in two till it reached the wide crescent of sea which sprang up to meet his sight as he breasted the hill. All the rich manor lay before him, billowed up and down in such sweeps of land as could only be seen in fair Devon. The sleepy sunny glamour of the West country was upon him, the sound of its speech in his ears, and out of its very heart rose the old lightning fork of pain that had driven him to shun it.

Dolly, playing with him barefoot in the lanes—Dolly grown to Dorothy, whose rose-hued face he had kissed in her fresh maidenhood—ah! and Dorothy, ruined, debased in her very womanhood, dragged in the mire, and dragging his soul with her, until he trampled his ideals underfoot with her memory.

He sat and gripped the fatal little book of verses, trying to think it all out, and disentangle the pain, and regain his standpoint of cynicism. It surged back on him, the training and experience of fifteen years. He remembered his old heat and sick anger

—the anger that makes men cold—at the thought of the Rev. George Dalkeith. If he had met him then, his fingers would have been iron strings round his throat to choke his great life out of his big animal body, even as Nell had said. And now he looked back at it with a sinister wonder that scorned himself. In a flash of self-revelation he realized that now he sympathized with the man, if anything. He felt that should they meet they would have something in common. His only regret was that, since the deed was to be done, he had not been the man to do it! Pity that Dolly should have fallen to another! Perhaps his moral degradation was complete in that he no longer thought of her as The Woman of his life, set apart in a holy of holies, but merely as one woman among many—who fed his appetite.

So absorbed was he in his day-dreaming that he did not hear a hesitating knock on the door, or the half-drawn curtain lifted and some one enter. At sight of him the intruder turned hastily to retire, and the movement roused Captain Amyas, who swung round in his chair.

It was quite a young girl who stood with one hand on the curtain, ready to flee, little more than a school-girl. She had a round unformed face, and was pretty with the prettiness of extreme youth, though her face was white and languid—even in that first half-glance it flashed across his practised mind that she had probably been very ill with sea-sickness in the rough weather across the Bay. Few of the ladies had appeared before Madeira, and he did not recollect seeing this girl at any of the tables or on

deck. She was a slight undeveloped thing, and her big eyes were those of a scared child.

"Well?" said D'Arcy, turning still more round from the table and smiling. His voice softened for this little girl, and he held out his hand as if to a child. He had ingratiating manners with children, who always liked him—a point invariably held up before masculine eyes by their mothers.

"I beg your pardon!" stammered the girl. "I'm Cherry—father said I was to tell you I was on board. He is Captain Benson."

"Oh!" Insensibly his voice altered. He sat still instead of rising, as he might have done for another girl who came into his cabin. The fact that Cherry was only Benson's daughter and paid second-class fare though she travelled first-class, did not influence him consciously; but perhaps, had he been a gentleman inwardly as well as outwardly—and he had the reputation of always being that—he would never have remembered it at all.

"And why haven't I seen you before?" he asked, stretching out a hand to the girl as she drew nearer the writing-table, a half-fascinated, half-shy look on her face. Cherry had had some experience of Merchant Captains, but they were of the type that took the *Seagull* out to Sydney, or wheresoever cargo was to be got, and the big man in the gold-braided uniform before her was as a bird of paradise compared to jays when contrasted with them.

"I've been so ill!" she said, flushing uncomfortably. "I'm not a very good sailor."

"Ah! poor little soul! It was rough enough to excuse any one goin' under though." He took the

small hand hanging limply at her side between both of his and played with it kindly. "Feel rather giddy still, don't you?"

"It's my head!—but I'm all right to-day," explained Cherry.

"You're faint, I expect. Haven't picked up yet. Come and lie down—you see how nice and soft my bed is!"

A slightly alarmed look came into the girl's face as he rose at last and turned to the berth. She was very ignorant, but certain things her father had told her roughly not to do, without further explanation. She murmured something about going down to the saloon for tea, and was shrinking past Amyas, who caught hold of her by the waist.

"What's that? Nonsense! I'll give you tea here. We'll have it cosily by ourselves!" He lifted the little soft body lightly, and laid her down on the berth, standing by her side and looking down at her.

"There! now you're comfortable. Head better?"

"Yes, thank you."

Cherry's head turned restlessly under his gaze. She had pretty hair, fair and curly, and tied back from her face with a ribbon, but not yet conventionally "put up." Amyas pulled a strand of it through his hard fingers while he laughed and talked with her, coaxing her out of her shyness. When the steward brought his tea he was sent back for a second cup, and retired to grin in the galley.

"The old man's got another gurl! Oh Lord!" he said.

The cook shrugged his shoulders and asked who it was.

"A little 'un this time. He's put her up in his berth already!" said the steward. Amyas' name was never so coarsely handled as by the men of his own boat, who none the less ran at his bidding where they walked for other people's.

"I give her three days!" said the cook sardonically.

In the meantime the Captain and his charge were wearing off the new edge of their relations with each other. Cherry ate her tea and enjoyed it, and the colour came into her cheeks and the light to her eyes while she told Amyas pretty nearly every detail of her innocent little life. She was seventeen, though she looked less, and had been at a school in England for the past five years while her father voyaged about the world, because he "doted on her," as Captain Ronny had expected. It had been a good school, and Cherry was very superior to Benson both in manner and appearance, as Amyas noticed with approval. She was going to live with a married aunt at Bulawayo now, for her mother had died long ago, and Dad wanted her to be somewhere with his own relations, and where he might occasionally have a chance to see her. She was a pretty little thing, and the colour seemed inclined to stop in her cheeks for good when the dressing-bugle sounded, and Amyas lifted her out of the berth and kissed her.

"You don't mind, do you, Cherry?" he said, holding her head back against his shoulder. "Because we're goin' to be great friends, and I wanted to seal the compact."

No, Cherry did not seem to mind at all, though the young dewy lips did not answer in words. Amyas might have remembered another maiden of

seventeen whom he had kissed in a Devon lane long ago, and spared this one for her sake; but he had thrust his memories behind him again when Cherry came into the cabin and distracted him.

"And we will keep our friendship all to ourselves, eh, Cherry?"

Yes, Cherry was evidently agreeable as to that, for she nodded. And then D'Arcy laughed and kissed her again, telling her to kiss him back, and lifted the curtain for her to run down the deck to the deckhouse.

Half-way down she met the Author strolling up to dress, for he had a deck cabin. He saw from whence she came, and as the rosy face flashed past him he stopped and looked backwards and forwards, from the girl's retreating figure to the curtain now quite drawn over the Captain's doorway.

"Ah!" said the Author significantly. He was a horrible little man.

The cook had given Cherry three days, but it was four or five before the other ladies on board began to look askance at her. The girl was in the Captain's cabin from morning till night—was there no one to look after her or warn her? It was useless to attempt interference, for she had been placed in the Captain's charge by her father, and her presence in Amyas' cabin was carelessly explained by that gentleman as being because she had been so ill, and wanted a corner to be quiet in, poor little thing! The other women echoed the last three words significantly, but nobody felt that it was absolutely their own disagreeable task to defend her against herself.

The little stunted Author smiled unpleasantly.

Captain Amyas had had time to read *Admirals All* half-a-dozen times through, but had not yet returned it, so no doubt thinking that it had been forgotten, the owner strolled up to his cabin one evening after dinner, put one foot on the step, and knocked. There was no answer, but through the hanging curtain he heard what might have been a little moaning cry if it had not been deadened by the thick folds.

The Author was reminded of something—an old garden he had once seen, with ivy-grown walls where nests were to be found, and the cry of a young wounded bird which had fallen on to the hard ground below, and trailed a fluttering broken wing. It might fly again, but never far—nor would it ever join its joyous comrades in the upper air.

He took his foot off the step and turned away. There was utter silence behind the curtain.

Later that same night one of the women who had held her skirts most carefully away for fear of contagion, passed Cherry's cabin on her way to her own, and heard the sound of sobbing. She did not stay and pry, of course—but the doorway was open and unscreened, and she looked.—Well, there was only a little girl on her knees by the sofa berth, with her face buried in her arms. It looked a very young and childish figure with the curly head bent so low, and shaking with such terrified sobs. And she was, after all, only old Benson's daughter—the little girl on whom he had spent his heart and soul, and worked doggedly through years of a harsh life that she might hold up her head with the best—as high, for instance, as the lady who passed on to her cabin and put the

incident out of her mind as soon as possible, for it was distasteful.

Cherry was a little harder in her manner for the few days that remained of the voyage—a little more inclined to brazen things out too. She went in and out of the Captain's cabin as she chose, with a frequency that might have been bravado; or more possibly—for she was a soft little thing, and no Amazon—merely a seeking for refuge, since no one else desired her company. The rest of the passengers were polite—passengers always are to each other when they talk most cruelly behind the scenes—but the thin cold barrier of their reserve thrust her quietly out into the storm to sink or swim. The Author never heard her cry out again, but he saw the voiceless cry in her eyes night and day.

He was the last person on board to know anything of her. She came out of the Captain's cabin from saying good-bye to Amyas, and the white bewilderment on her scared little face touched his artistic appreciation perhaps. He saw her standing by the little luggage she had, and went and spoke to her.

"Going ashore yet, Miss Benson?"

She stared at him, and shivered a little as she answered—

"Yes, I have to get to the railway station. I am to catch the Johannesburg train."

"Shall I get you a place on the tug, then?"

"Yes—please."

He not only saw her over Durban Bar, but he accompanied her and her boxes through the customs house and to the station. She seemed stunned, and hardly thanked him, offering him her hand mechanic-

ally before the train started. The last he saw was her frightened face, like a child's which is lost in the dark, at the carriage window, and her eyes blinded with tears.

He stood looking after the train as it disappeared, with his hands in his pockets; then he went back to the ship and the Captain's cabin. His knock was this time so distinct that it was promptly answered.

"What's the matter? Come in."

Amyas had just changed out of uniform to go ashore. He did not look particularly pleased to see his visitor.

"Sorry I intruded!" said the Author. "Have you finished with that book of mine?"

"Oh—yes! There it is." Amyas took it out of a drawer in the writing-table. "Thanks very much."

"Hope you enjoyed it!" said the Author, with his dog-grin. "Good old Drake! he was a veteran. Guess he had a wife in every port though, same as all sailors!"

He slung his shoulders round under Amyas' angry eyes, and went away chanting—and the incongruous taste of Nature having bestowed on him a marvellously sweet voice, the notes lilted along the deck like very jewels of sound.

"You call yourself a man,
For all you used to swear,
And leave me, as you can,
My certain shame to bear?"

CHAPTER XIII

"Fair, fair Devon!
Glassed in Heaven
As her lovers see.—
Doeth not Devon
Rhyme with Heaven?
So doe they agree.
God dropped Devon
Out of Heaven—
Devon by the sea!"

Devon Song.

THE lane ran upwards and downwards, crossing the head of Trawles Valley, and out at its lowest dip by Trawles Water. It was a perfect curve between the hills, one end rising up over the Down, and the other ending in a sheep-track among the high lands on the Exeter side of Trawles. Half-way up the slope to the Down two girls were sitting on the bank eating wild strawberries that grew there. There were slabs of granite thrust into the rose-red mould to prevent it slipping down into the lane itself, and between these slabs grew long grass, intensely green and as fine as a girl's hair—far finer than any that can be cultivated on a lawn. The strawberries grew in clumps under the ivy-tangled hedges, and Nell had climbed like an Exmoor pony to get them.

"So you are going away to-morrow, Laurie," she said slowly, pausing with a ripe berry half-way to her mouth. "I wonder why it is my fate to make friends only with those I must lose! Had you been living in

Trawles I suppose I should never have cared about you!"

"That is rather nasty of you, Nell," said the other girl, stretching out her hand and laying it on Nell's tiny fingers. "Does it give me some special virtue that I was down here for a month to recuperate after influenza, and being lonely, took to wandering about the country and met you? I should be just the same Laurie Desmond if I had settled in Trawles for the rest of my life!"

"No, that is just it—being Laurie Desmond I feel that the fates would never be so kind to me as to settle you in Trawles! You come and go—all the people I have liked have come and gone. Only *I* am always left!"

Her soft passionate voice—the more passionate because so soft—trembled into silence. A bird sang in the June evening, and the dropping of Trawles Water sounded like a burr below them. The rich moist air was heavy with the scent of the earth and all it brings forth.

"How I love this Devonshire of yours!" said Laurie slowly, her eyes straying off to glowing vistas of woody hollow and grass-swept upland—all the perfect green life of the country. "It is like a corner of Heaven, so old and still and yet alive! Coming straight from Yorkshire and the 'barren North' as I do, you cannot think how I appreciate it. I never saw anything like it before—I never dreamed of it!"

"You have paraphrased the old Devon song," said Nell, smiling. "Don't you remember?

'God dropped Devon
Out of Heaven—
Devon by the sea!

Even I, who have always known it and always lived in it, can never tire of its loveliness. People say that it is lazy and languorous, but I never found it so."

"Nothing would make you lazy, Nell—you are too quick a fairy." There was a moment's pause, and then she added, "Your sister is very unlike you?"

"Yes." Nell turned her brown eyes restlessly up and down the lane and to the ivy-trails above her head. The ivy was doing its best to kill a beech tree, and the green moss had coated the ivy and was trying to kill in its turn. Nell noticed these things, and thought that Nature's watchword was Rapine. "You have only seen her once or twice," she said.

"She appears somehow so much older than you—of course she is very good to look at, all the same."

"Dorothy was always that. I suppose even if people are broken on the rack they still keep the colour of their eyes and the gloss on their hair."

"She does not look much like the rack. Except that she is so very quiet, she seems to me singularly unruffled and content. I have learnt to suspect extreme quietude to be a mask for trouble, but I should hardly have thought it was so in your sister's case."

"She has outgrown it—I have never outgrown it!" said Nell briefly. "Yes, you are right—she looks contented, and she probably is so. She has grown plump and matronly. She has had five children! She would tell you, if you asked, that that man—Mr. Dalkeith—is a good husband. But she lost something fifteen years ago; she was a girl then, an independent thing with a soul, not a type of maternity—intended merely to bear and nurse children!"

"Dreadful!" Laurie knew that story, and shivered. Nell's fierce white face was turned on her with burning eyes; it always went so when she spoke of her sister.

"It was more than her own soul that she lost," said Nell dreamily, her little hands clenched in the long fine grass at her side. "There was a boy who loved her, and he went too! He's a man now, and I think a bad one. He loved Dolly from the time we all played together—down in that lane I showed you that leads into the Exeter road."

"Poor boy! Who was he?"

"The son of an old captain who lived down here, an ex-Navy man. His name was Captain Amyas. D'Arcy Amyas is Captain Amyas now. He is in the Merchant Service, and the rumour of his doings has reached even Trawles."

"Poor boy!" said Laurie again. She was thinking of the wrecked young life, and of Dolly.

"Yes, you would have been sorry if you had known him. He was a nice boy, but it seemed to alter him. I saw him just after it all came out—some one must have told him. We were in the wood up there"—she pointed with her forefinger to the cliff-side overhanging Trawles. "It was raining, and the wind lashing through the trees, and we stood and looked at each other. All the goodness was wiped out of his face, and I saw that he was only a devil. He went away—I told you they all go away!—and out across the world, and he found it hard as I told him he would. I saw him last about five or six years ago—perhaps more. He was riding downhill fast then!"

"Poor boy!" said Laurie for the third time. "What was he like?"

"I will show you a photograph I have of him at home. It was taken when he was young—and might have been a good fellow. He gave it to—Dolly. He is in uniform—you know I told you he is in the Merchant Service. I wondered if you would meet him by any chance, when I heard you were going to Africa."

"Ah! but we are going a long tour round, overland, and home by the other side of the world."

"You might return by sea—something might happen to change your plans. Anyhow I will write to D'Arcy and tell him to look out for you. But I do not say you will like him now!"

"Why?"

Nell laughed her queer laugh. "His step-sister, Millicent, will hardly know him since her marriage!" she said. "She is too respectable, and the fame of him is gone abroad into all lands. He must be very fast!"

Laurie's brows knitted themselves. "I do not like that," she said. "No woman does who knows what it really means—it is only silly little girls who think there is something grand and fascinating about a man who has that reputation. The real translation is that he is ruining his health by some self-indulgence or other. Does Captain Amyas drink?"

"No—it's women," said Nell, with an impish shrug of her shoulders. "I should think I am the only girl whom D'Arcy has known intimately to whom he has not made love! I dare say you will hear of him on your way through Africa. Do you know any one there?"

"No," said Laurie thoughtfully, "unless we go to Bulawayo. There was a little girl at school with me who was a great pet amongst the older girls, of whom I was one. She was only about twelve when I left, and her name was Cherry Benson. She was a pretty little thing, and very clinging and affectionate. She wrote to me for years after I left—in fact I had her last letter about six months ago, and then she told me she was leaving school, and going out to Africa to live with an aunt whose address she gave me. I shall go and look her up if we get there."

"School friendships always seem to last, don't they?" said Nell, leaning her pointed chin in her hand. "I never went to school, so I never had any!"

"I did not make so many friends. Oughtn't we to be getting home, Nell? I wish I had hired Bessie and the cart, then we could have stayed later."

Both girls rose and scrambled down the bank, almost tumbling into the lane, and turned their faces downhill. Bessie was a small Exmoor pony, who was hired out by the owner of a diminutive "general" shop in Trawles to the few visitors who came there. She pulled a little rough dogcart, devoid of springs or cushions; but Laurie Desmond had hired the conveyance on many occasions when she and Nell wished to go far afield. Laurie was still so much of an invalid that she could not walk far up and down the hills, and though Nell had done it all her life she was glad to ride for a time—it was a new experience. Only since Laurie had dropped into her life had she known what it was to afford such small luxuries as Bessie and the cart, whose hire was eighteenpence an hour. Nell's general life did not admit of the expenditure of

eighteenpences, and she never shared her sister's equipage, though Mrs. Dalkeith had her pony carriage at her own disposal. But then they lived twenty miles apart, and Nell's rare visits were made by train.

Laurie Desmond was not to be called rich, but she was independent enough in means and character to take rooms in Trawles and stop there by herself when the doctors sent her into Devonshire. She was one of those girls whose characters have been strengthened and moulded by the lack of any support. Her money was her own, and her parents being dead, she preferred to live an independent life rather than make her home permanently with any one, though the greater part of her year was spent with an uncle and aunt, Colonel and Mrs. Desmond. It was with them that she was going round the world on a tour of pleasure and profit, since they were all three in harmony and loved to travel. Besides Colonel and Mrs. Desmond she had only one near relative—a step-brother, who was afterwards an agent of Fate in her life. But at this time he hardly influenced her, for he was in London in the office of a large mercantile firm, and lived with some connections of his mother's.

Nell and Laurie went home slowly, loitering through the lanes, up to the small cottage where the Rev. Sydney Culverton lived on patiently from year to year without hope of change. He had no influence to back him or to push him on, nor was he a brilliant man to rise by his own gifts. He was simply a hard-working parish priest, whose absolutely unselfish labours among his poor met with but scant acknowledgment. He had little money to give away, and only a few recognized his value and loved the

"Pareson"—a title they reserved for him from his long connection with them, and would not give to the vicar. The latter was, as Millicent Amyas had said, a slave-driver. True, he spared himself as little as his curate, but Sydney Culverton's position had hardly been bettered after the tragedy in his home which had driven the Rev. the Hon. George Dalkeith away from the vicarage.

Nell lifted the latch of the garden gate and preceded Laurie up the path between rows of cabbages and beans. The cottage had only a strip of garden, running uphill,—most things were on a slant in Trawles—and this was thriftily devoted to useful produce. But pink roses and honeysuckle rioted over the porch, and jessamine thrust itself in at the windows and made the rooms odorous.

The cottage was thatched with straw, and a portion of it had lately been renewed, so that patches of golden yellow showed amidst the nondescript brown of the older roof. It was an old building altogether, with small-paned latticed windows, and chimney-flues built out at odd angles which had grown first mossy and then become the bed of some strange plant which wanted but little depth of soil. Laurie did not know its name, but she had seen it clinging like a parasite to similar ledges in the older houses in Trawles.

They went into a stone-flagged passage, and up a narrow wooden stairway leading to Nell's own little room, of which the ceiling sloped, cutting away a goodly piece of one whitewashed wall. It was a barer room than many a cottager's wife's, but clean and cool and as innately dainty as Nell herself.

"I shall always see you in this little room!" Laurie

said, sitting down by the open window and looking out across the darkening garden. "It is so like you, Nell!"

Nell did not answer. She was moving about the room, removing her hat and tidying her hair. Suddenly she took something from the wall and put it into Laurie's hands.

"There is the likeness I told you I would show you," she said, peering over Laurie's shoulder at it.

Laurie held it in her hands and looked at it in the summer dusk. It was small and faded—a likeness taken eighteen years ago of a quite young man in a peaked cap and the suggestion of uniform in what could be seen of his clothes, but it was only a head and shoulders. It was the D'Arcy who had kissed Dolly in the lane at which Laurie gazed, an even younger D'Arcy than Lady Arthur had known.

"He does not look as if he *could* be a bad fellow!" she said at last, slowly.

"Ah, he is not like that now," said Nell. "He has broadened and coarsened. His features seem to be thicker, his lips——"

"Oh, don't!" Laurie exclaimed impulsively. "I like this so much—I don't want to know the other. He was a nice boy here—rather over-sensitive than otherwise, and a little discontented."

"He is not discontented now," said Nell with her terrible wisdom, "because he probably never denies himself anything! D'Arcy might have been irritable if he had gone on living here, but his life has been too broad for that." Nell knew nothing of the monotony of taking a ship backwards and forwards over the same line from year's end to year's end, and the consequent

temptation to distraction. But her theory was in general correct. D'Arcy was not irritable, though it was mainly due to the healthy conditions of the first twelve years of his life, rather than his later self-indulgences. Trawles had built him up a constitution that it would take him many years to break down.

Laurie handed the photograph back after a minute without further comment, and went down to supper with her friend. It was not always that there was supper at the cottage, but the trawlers had had a small haul, and the inhabitants profited. When the haul was large it was packed at once and went to the big towns, but a small haul was disposed of locally and so cheaply that even the Culvertons fared well on fresh fish and bread-and-butter.

After supper the girls went out and sat in the porch, sniffing the warm flower-scented air, and watching the cold English stars come out in the far-off heavens which never grew really dark all night. Laurie's thoughts had wandered away to the projected tour, and she was thinking that a few weeks hence she would see the Southern Cross, when Nell spoke and startled her.

"Do you ever wonder why I hate George Dalkeith so, Laurie?"

Laurie turned her face to the sound of the stirred voice. It had hardly been more than a whisper, for the sitting-room window was open, and Mr. Culverton was writing in there with a shaded lamp.

"No; I think your resentment of that old wrong is very deep though, Nell. You hardly see your sister, do you?"

"I cannot—she went out of my life when she

married him. He is bad—bad all through to the core, Laurie."

"Then you are right not to know him, Nell—unless it could do your sister any good."

"You have never been in love, Laurie!—never even savoured its possibility!"

"Why do you say that?"

"I know it by the simple way in which you face life. Right is right, and wrong is wrong to you at present. When love steps in it complicates everything—it teaches you two dreadful things—charity and sympathy. They show you all the world, instead of that little piece of it straight in front of you which is all you saw before. Sometimes I think they are blind guides, and sometimes I know that in them lies our only hope of heaven!"

"Why do you say all this, I wonder? What has it to do with the subject on which you began?"

"Don't you see that George Dalkeith is the man I could have loved if things had been otherwise? I have always known it, from the very first. He has just the splendid physique and size and strength that I want, because I am so small, and often weak and ailing."

"You do not show it, Nell!"

"No, I do not show it because I have been trained to endure from a child. That man—Mr. Dalkeith—ruined my father's health and strength with hard work, ground us down into poverty because my father's conscience forced him to supply the needs of a neglected parish—broke three lives on the wheel of his own pleasures, even while we were only children. I watched it for years—it was the first

thing that I realized in life. Then he killed Dolly—morally at all events—and I had to bow my head meekly with the others and beg him to marry her. I have hardly known her since he has done so. I cut myself off from them on purpose, lest some day I should stand up and tell him what I really thought and felt! And yet through it all I have known that I could have loved him, as Dolly never did, if he had been a good man—good even with commonplace masculine virtues. Being what he is I have had the grace to hate him."

Laurie listened to the strange whispered confession across the dusk. Ever afterwards she thought of Nell as telling her that secret of her life in the darkness, their faces a blur from each other, the far-off stars looking down in serene disdain at the unrecorded tortures, and the lives gone astray, which were lived out on earth.

She left Trawles the next day, and went across England to Dover to join Colonel and Mrs. Desmond. So thoroughly had the quiet of the place imbued her, that she felt the busy seaport as another world, and bewildered by its alien atmosphere of coming and going to other lands. The Devonshire influence wore off in the course of a few days, but far back in her memory lay that picture of intense and rich peace, a gem of country with a life apart, and its moving spirit in her mind was Nell, with her fairy face and figure and the faint echo of the West country in her voice. Nell's speech was wonderfully pure and free from accent considering that all her life had been set within a few scattered miles of Trawles; but her vowels were as soft as only Devon's are—the sugges-

tion of a "tu" for "to," the slurring of a *g*, the sudden introduction of local words and phrases marking her West-country birthright. Perhaps, loving Nell, she loved the place where she had met her the more; but it seemed indeed to Laurie that—

"God dropped Devon
Out of Heaven—
Devon by the sea!"

The Desmonds crossed to Calais and went direct to Marseilles, the bright foreign country flashing past Laurie's eyes and waking her to life and energy and the interest in trivial things which her stay in Trawles seemed almost to have lulled to sleep. From Marseilles they went by boat to Port Said, and thence to Cairo and up the Nile. Colonel Desmond knew Egypt by heart—he had been in the Egyptian army—and he was an invaluable companion. Laurie got on with her uncle and aunt better than with most people; they were not young, but they had the experience of having mixed with men and women in all portions of the globe rather than of the mere passing of years. Colonel Desmond was a grey-haired man, with a twinkle in his eyes; there seemed to be nobody whom he had not met or heard of, and his conversation had the adaptability of the social genius who is born and not made. He was always popular, and had the reputation of telling an excellent story—particularly after dinner. His wife had a keen judgment and quick wits under a lazy exterior. She was stout, and apt to take her ease physically, but her mind kept more than abreast with the youth of the times, and was as active as a much younger woman's. They had a wholesome influence

on Laurie, who was a little too theoretical from lack of personal experience, and their point of view insensibly corrected her rigid standards of life.

"Laurie is like a child at present," said Mrs. Desmond once. "Her yea is yea, and her nay, nay; but she has not realized the multiplicity of human nature, and the impossibility of setting rules for other people. When she comes in contact with some instance in direct opposition to her ideals, but which a personal interest demands that she shall not condemn, it will begin to educate her."

Strangely enough Nell Culverton, out of her narrow life, had seen and said the same thing.

The Desmonds were still in Egypt when Nell's letter concerning her friend reached D'Arcy Amyas. He was at Durban on his homeward way, and more interested at the moment in the French atrocities in Madagascar, with which he had just come in contact, than with his home mail. He opened Nell's letter with a brief glance of wonder at the unrecognized handwriting, having missed the postmark.

"Dear D'Arcy," it began.

He turned in still greater surprise to the signature. Few women wrote to him by his name, and this was a woman's handwriting. He did not encourage letters, or if he did, only under a pseudonym. The epistle had the merit of brevity, which surprised him still more; he turned the page—"Nell Culverton."

The sensitive memory, on which the very name of Trawles acted like a charm, played him false again. The scent of the hay from the sloping meadows was in his nostrils; the banks were green with fern, and the wild flowers a flush of beauty. Trawles Water

went singing to the sea, and the red-sailed trawlers were out, scattered over the bay. . . . He came back with a start to Nell's letter.

"DEAR D'ARCY,—If in your journeyings to and fro across the world you should meet with a certain Laurie Desmond, please recall that she is a friend of mine, and make yourself known to her as another. She is going a long trip overland, which will take her to Africa at one point, and should anything happen to bring her back by sea, some freak of Fate might cause you to meet. She has been for a month in Trawles this year for her health, and I found her trying to climb the bank above the Race in search of hart's-tongue. You know it grows up there among the dead stumps, and also how one may slip back and get an ugly fall and a ducking if one does not know the Stairway. I saved her from that, and we made friends. I have no more to say of her than that—I like her! Yours, NELL CULVERTON."

D'Arcy thought more of the picture Nell's letter brought up than of her friend. The Race was a wide shallow in Trawles Water where the current eddied fiercely and then leaped down some feet among the rocks to find a narrow bed through the meadows. He knew the spot well, and the hart's-tongue ferns that grew among the old bowls of elms long since cut down; as children they had all climbed up after the ferns by the twisted roots which they called the "Stairway." He put the letter in his pocket, and forgetting Miss Laurie Desmond, he took his boat back to England without discovering her.

From Egypt the Desmonds wandered down to

Aden, and so to Colombo, where they stayed for some time. Their intention was to go on to Australia, and thence to South America, from which they would come home, leaving Africa for another occasion. The first part of this programme they carried out, but Mrs. Desmond had been so ill during the voyage from Colombo to Australia that she declined to attempt to round the Horn, and Colonel Desmond proposed returning home *viâ* Africa instead. They landed at Beira and proceeded up country, none of them having yet seen much of the third continent of the world.

Of all the changing, splendid sights she saw during that nine months' trip, Laurie remembered best one brief dramatic episode, mainly because it was a tragedy the like of which had never shaken the levels of her life before. It stretched her imagination to cope with it, and the process began that education of which Mrs. Desmond spoke; but the shock of a fresh experience opening up new vistas of life is painful to the recipient.

It happened at Bulawayo. The flat zinc-roofed colonial town, with its long avenue of trees intersecting it throughout, hardly impressed Laurie at first; only when she got it into her mind as the background of a dramatic situation did she never lose the impression of it. The day after their arrival she went, by herself, to hunt up her old school-fellow, leaving Colonel and Mrs. Desmond to explore the town. The Bensons lived in a commonplace-looking house enough in Tenth Avenue. There was nothing to raise it above the ordinary level of the most petty things of life, but when she had passed its unpre-

tentious door, Laurie found suddenly that she was in the midst of a domestic tragedy.

She never knew exactly what happened. She had no remembrance of the stages by which she came to grasp the situation, or how she was admitted as a spectator—in some sort an actor. She only felt the pain of the shock in her life, the jar of something hideous in the midst of the African sunshine, and the scene in the midst of which she seemed to find herself without any preparation. A man, a woman, and a girl—the latter little more than a child—made up the foreground of the picture, and herself somehow as an interested participator of the whole, in the background. The man was a rough man with coarse ways and manners; she recognized that he was not of her own class, and that his life—of which she knew nothing—gave him a certain lawlessness. But what frightened her more than anything was his face, and the way he cursed and raved at some one whose name he could not tell, and swore to have his life. She felt that he would fulfil his threat, and it was like looking on at deliberate murder in broad daylight.

The woman was hard-featured and outspoken. There was no reticence in her handling of what had occurred. As she accused the girl of unlawful motherhood, and pointed out her physical state to her at the present moment, Laurie felt that she must shriek or cover her ears. She would have run away if it had not been for the sake of the girl, whom her whole energies, her impulsively outstretched arms, seemed too slight to screen.

A girl, almost a child—the little innocent school-girl who had been so loved and petted! Curly-headed

Cherry, who wrote her loving little letters for years, such a grateful heart had she—now that heaving, panting heap by the bedside, choking with sobs and begging them not to curse her. The new motherhood in the slight frame, which was too young and feeble to support its dignity, seemed to Laurie enough reproach to have stayed those cruel tongues.

"Go away!" she said suddenly. "Go away, and leave me with her!" She sprang erect herself, and drove the dreadful outspoken woman and the threatening man from the room. She turned the key on them, and going back to the bed knelt down and took the little wreck of maidenhood in her arms.

"Hush!" she said, soothing the sobs. "You will hurt yourself, dear!"

She thought, in an agony of anxiety, of that unborn life. No shrinking from the disgrace and the sin of her theories occurred to her: she was concerned as a woman, and the untried youth in her dropped away.

Cherry sobbed on, trembling, and clinging to her rescuer. After a while Laurie disentangled a few words from her panting breath, and divined that she was anxious for her seducer.

"Dad will kill him—he says so!" she gasped.

This was another wonder—this survival of love from the wreck of its degradation. Laurie felt as if the child she held in her arms were infinitely older than herself in wisdom. She said simply, "Would he marry you?"

"Oh no!"

There was no hesitation in that wistful, ignorant humbleness.

"What is his name, dear?"

"I will not give it up—Dad doesn't know. They may kill me, but I'll never tell them!"

"Would you like to tell me, Cherry?" She wondered how she knew that the girl would trust her and would be relieved to tell.

"Will you swear to keep it secret?"

"Yes."

She whispered a name, and Laurie did not flinch or tremble. Only for an instant she grew perfectly still, while she thought of Dolly, and of another scene that must have resembled this years ago. Nell's words came back too—"I saw that he was only a devil!"

She rose from her knees at last, feeling very sick. Cherry was quieter, but trembling. Laurie helped her to undress and got her into bed. Then she kissed her, and said she would go and speak to her aunt and father.

"I will not let them bully you," she said.

She walked into the sitting-room with a firm light step and her head thrown up. There was an authority about her to which even the woman bowed, staring at her with some curiosity under bent brows. Cherry's aunt was not hard of heart; she had only the practical common-sense of her class, and resented the shipwreck of the poor little life over which she must watch. She flounced about and banged things on the table, but she was not uncivil, even when Laurie told her plainly that she must nurse Cherry gently, and not speak a word of reproach. Perhaps plain speaking suited her.

The man was harder to deal with, being beyond control of God or devil. He was mad with rage and

pain, and his bloodshot eyes rolled restlessly away from Laurie even while she spoke to him.

"Do you know his name? Has she told you who it is?" he said hungrily. "She won't tell me!"

"She is afraid you will kill him!"

"So I will!"

Laurie shuddered. "I cannot give you his name," she said. "You must treat your daughter kindly."

"Amyas was responsible!" he said with an oath. "I put her in his care—but he's too fine a gentleman to look after a girl. He let one of his d——d passengers ruin her"—he used a broader word—"and won't even know who. Or else it was some one on the way up."

Laurie did not answer. She left the house with a faint giddiness growing upon her that threatened to make her fall in the long glaring street. A conviction that Benson would discover the perpetrator of the outrage and fulfil his threat was upon her, and though she loathed the mere idea of the man who was guilty, she felt that she ought perhaps to warn him. It was a mere instinct of common humanity, backed by a morbid prick of conscience, that told her she would fain have abandoned him to his fate. Benson must find out in time; there would be a dozen witnesses on board ready to hint the probability to him, though they said nothing definite.

She found Colonel and Mrs. Desmond too upset themselves to notice her appearance when she got back to the hotel. They had just received a telegram necessitating their return to England, and the Colonel had wired to Durban booking passages in the next boat leaving after they could get back there. Mrs. Desmond did remark that Laurie looked white and

shaken, but supposed that she had foolishly walked home in the sun.

"Never mind me," said Laurie wearily. She felt she could not tell them anything about Cherry as yet—perhaps not at all. It was an experience too raw to be criticized. "What boat are we going in? When do we leave?"

"This afternoon—you had better go and tumble your things into the boxes. Isn't it a pity our trip should be cut short? It's a mercy we didn't go on to South America, though!"

She forgot to mention the boat, and Laurie did not notice the omission. Not until they reached Durban, and were going on board, did she hear that it was the *Princess*, and Colonel Desmond added, "The Captain is that brute Amyas! Don't have anything to do with him, either of you. Do you hear?"

"The man who can't keep his hands off a woman, isn't he?" said his wife. "That's an exaggeration no doubt, but I have heard ugly tales of him. I shall be curious to see if he is really attractive. I know the type of ladies' captain—a fat body, red cheeks, black hair and beard, and generally handsome eyes!"

Colonel Desmond grunted. He had said his say, and dropped an unsavoury subject. Had he had a choice he would have booked in another boat.

Laurie said nothing.

CHAPTER XIV

"Yea, and the scorn she had of me
In the old time, doubtless vexed her then.
I never should have kissed her. See
What fools God's anger makes of men!

Yea, all this time I tended her,
I know the old love held fast his part;
I know the old scorn waxed heavier
Mixed with sad wonder in her heart."

A. C. SWINBURNE.

THE *Princess* had left the shore behind her some hours, and was steaming away over smooth blue water, ringed round with the same element to the horizon line, before Laurie had the encounter to which she half looked forward as a thing to be got over, and yet dreaded with sickening senses and a moral shudder. She had a great horror of all unclean things, and to her the moral leprosy of the man whom she felt it her duty to warn of his danger was as tangible as the physical disease would have been.

She did not, naturally enough, catch sight of the Captain going out of harbour, and it was the later afternoon before they met and passed each other, but without recognition on either side at the moment. Colonel and Mrs. Desmond's seats were at the Captain's table, and their niece's also; but the Captain did not appear at luncheon, he was on the bridge. Laurie had some unpacking to do after lunch, and went to her cabin, which she was sharing with another lady—a stranger to her. When she came on board

again it was about four o'clock, and the long promenade deck was half full of deck-chairs whose occupants were reading, or dozing, or making acquaintance with each other. Laurie emerged from the deckhouse on the port side, but not seeing her aunt among the loungers went up for'ard, and skirting the Captain's cabin began her hunt down the starboard. She had just caught sight of Mrs. Desmond, who looked like a mere comfortable bundle of wraps at a distance, when she heard some one coming along the deck behind her, and one of the passengers said, "Good-afternoon, Captain."

Laurie did not turn, but the man for whom she had been waiting passed her, and she looked at him.

So this was Captain Amyas. A big, blond man—D'Arcy had filled out, as Savernake said—with blue eyes drawn upwards at the corners, as if through much looking out over miles of sea, fairly good features, and a tanned skin. He had grown the short beard he wore as more suited to his profession than only the soft moustache of his junior days, and the real golden of his hair looked almost yellow thrown up by his burnt face and neck. D'Arcy Amyas had been something more than fair-haired from his youth up; that nondescript term includes half-a-dozen shades of brown when applied to Englishmen. D'Arcy's hair was bright enough to be termed golden—pale enough for straw colour. He was wearing the ordinary dark-blue cloth, it not being hot enough yet for the white linen which the Officers affected in the tropics. His cap was tilted over his eyes, and the gold band made a sharp line in the thickness of his bright hair. Had he not been marked out beforehand in her mind by his unhallowed notoriety, the girl would have

passed him over as a well-looking man enough, apparently suited to his place in life, and probably a gentleman.

He strolled to the side of the ship and looked over, asking a question of a sailor passing at the moment. Laurie shivered involuntarily as the soft flat accent struck on her ears. How it brought back Trawles! Every woman who had had cause to remember Captain Amyas sauced her memories with that emphatic betrayal of his county in his speech. Long after his face was an evil dream to them, the chance hearing of a shortened vowel, or the soft hoarseness of a fellow-countryman, would bring him back vividly as when he walked his own deck in the days of their folly.

He had passed Laurie to reach the ship's side, and she hesitated a second whether to pass him again. The next she had made her way quietly through the deck-chairs, and reaching her aunt's side, with a little sigh of relief sat down by her. Amyas noticed the girl as she walked down the deck from habit. She was tall, and light on her feet; he thought she moved easily, and probably had a pretty figure. But her back was towards him.

"Who's that girl goin' up the deck?" he said to his Chief Officer, who had been on duty among the passengers and was near at hand.

"Who, sir? Oh, the tall girl in white. Her name is Desmond, I think."

"Oh," said Amyas, without the name striking him —he had almost forgotten Nell's letter. "Who is she with?"

"She has her people on board—a Colonel and Mrs. Desmond. They are rather nice, I believe."

D'Arcy dropped the subject and began his usual

round amongst his guests, stopping to chat with one group and another, recognizing old friends or making new ones. It was rather a pleasant boatload on the whole—to him, at any rate; there were a good many young married women, some of them returning home as grass-widows, and he had generally picked them out as his companions on former voyages. The incident of Cherry had been unusual, for he rarely bestowed more than passing attention on girls, to the unbounded relief of their parents and guardians; but then he had not regarded "old Benson's daughter" as in the same station in life as the girls who travelled on his boat in the conventional charge of their own families. Had he stated his real opinion of the status of Joseph Benson and himself, he would have been forced to own that though professionally in the same position, Benson did not by any means belong to the same class as himself. Nor to a certain extent did he. It is one of the most confusing snares of the Merchant Service that there are no absolute barriers between class and class, and nothing to prevent, though disadvantages may hinder, a *Warspite* boy from rising to the same position as an apprentice from the *Worcester*, the one being possibly a waif from the streets and the other the son of gentlefolk. Such lack of distinction has its drawbacks as well as its incentives to ambition. D'Arcy regarded Cherry Benson as much in the same category as a village girl in Trawles, or a little maid at a hotel—fair game if she could be persuaded to part with her virtue, and with no great blame attaching to her seducer. If he suffered from an uneasy conscience it was purely on account of the girl's age and ignorance; but at the time of their intimacy he had been urged on headlong

by the very difficulties in his way. Cherry had not been a consenting confederate of the young married woman type that D'Arcy knew so well; she had been frightened, and tried to break the chain of her fascination many times, and all his sporting instinct had been roused to run down his quarry. When escape was impossible, and the girl had made one last frantic effort to resist she knew not what, the man's passion had carried him away,—and then, the sensation of shame being uncomfortable to the robust male animal, he had forgotten the girl as soon as circumstances released him from the reproach of her presence.

He did not think of the Desmonds again until he saw them seated at his own table on taking his place. Colonel Desmond's cool, keen face was usually attractive to his fellow-men, and he was talking, and talking well, to an influential passenger well known to Amyas. But beyond a cursory remark in the general hum of conversation, he did not address the Captain at all. Nor was his wife any more effusive. True they were at the further end of the table, but Amyas' trained senses told him that there was an uncongenial note here—without being in the least uncivil they were not going to cultivate him. He had met this kind of aloofness before, but it had troubled him little, being confined to persons whose strictness of theories made them dull and uninteresting to his mind, besides their invariable unimportance. In the case of such people as the Desmonds, however, it annoyed him. The Colonel was a pleasant passenger with an attractive personality, and a man of the world; his wife was equally delightful, to judge from the pleased expression of her neighbours and the laughter at that end of the table. Amyas chafed

silently, and looked at the third member of the party. He remembered her as the slender girl who had walked well, now he saw her face. She was well-bred and good-looking, he thought, but not to be described as pretty. That was too conventional and ordinary a word for this girl's type of face. She parted her hair at the side too, which gave her an unusual appearance; it suited her face perfectly, and when she smiled that half-humorous, half-grave smile, she made him interested in spite of himself. He looked at her steadily off and on through dinner, but could not discover that she once lifted her grey eyes in his direction. He only discovered their colour through her turning her face in answer to some speech from a lady nearer him. The attitude of the whole party puzzled him, and he sought them out after dinner purposely, pausing to say a few words in his character of host as he did to every one on board. Mrs. Desmond was sitting in her deck-chair again, listening to the band; the girl was next her, her eyes straying among the passengers promenading to and fro, her attitude as unconscious as if Amyas had not stopped at all.

"I am afraid you are too near the music to be pleasant," he said, with a lift of his cap.

"Not at all," said Mrs. Desmond, with complete civility, but none of the friendliness which begins an acquaintance. "How well they play! We are enjoying it so much."

"Yes, they are gettin' their chance now, and makin' much of it. When it comes to rougher weather they are not quite such good performers," said Amyas, smiling.

"I suppose not. It is beautiful weather certainly,

but really quite fresh to-night. Laurie, I really think you would be wiser to get a wrap of some sort."

"Perhaps I should," returned the girl composedly, and rose at once and went down to the cabins.

Laurie—Laurie Desmond. Amyas repeated it aimlessly to himself as he walked away to other groups where he was evidently more welcome. He wondered whether he had ever heard the name before, that it seemed so familiar, and then he remembered Nell's letter. The recollection distinctly pleased him; he had a right of acquaintance with this supremely indifferent young lady, and would exercise it. Let the Desmonds stand as far off as they chose, they should at least suffer him to speak to Laurie to some extent. Having aggravated them he had no intention of pursuing the acquaintance further, for he did not think the girl would be to his taste.

The carrying out of his scheme, even to mentioning Nell, however, was not so easy as it seemed. Laurie was singularly illusive; he could not interrupt her in a game of deck quoits, nor could he begin the attack down the length of the table at meals, and for some days it chanced that he said nothing of his knowledge of her. Her perfectly composed manner never betrayed the fact that she knew with absolute horror and dread whenever he passed near her, and wondered if she could ever bring herself to demand a *tête-à-tête* in which to tell him of that grim tragedy at Bulawayo and the danger pursuing him.

"I think our Captain is the most objectionable man I ever met," she said frankly to Mrs. Desmond. "There is no need for uncle to warn us against him—he is a warning in himself."

"H'm," said her aunt shrewdly. "I suppose you

saw him with Mrs. Langly last night. So did I; but it was the most unexpected ill-luck for him that we passed when we did. To do him justice he chose his time and place well—it was twenty to one against their being caught."

"Please don't, aunty. It was all too disgusting to discuss."

"My dear Laurie, don't be childish! You are over-young in some things. Mrs. Langly likes it, and that is nearly enough excuse for a man. I have a suspicion that he sits with his hand on her knee during meals!"

"Aunty!"

"Well, they are next each other, my dear, and it's odd if they avoid *all* contact, considering the type of man that Captain Amyas is. He does not attract me, however, any more than he does you—he reminds me of an over-fed, thoroughbred tom-cat. Here he comes along the deck, looking as if he purred, and all the women stroking him in fancy as he passes!"

In spite of herself Laurie laughed a vexed laugh just as Amyas reached them. There was an empty chair next her, and he dropped into it. She blamed herself, and laid it down to her involuntary hilarity, but her aunt's simile had been irresistible.

"Do you know I can almost claim a former acquaintance with you, Miss Desmond?" he said, turning on her before she could quite recover herself. The corners of her mouth quivered, and settled into extreme gravity, however, as her serene eyes met his.

"I had a letter from a mutual friend about you some months ago, tellin' me you were comin' to Africa."

"Miss Culverton?" she said quietly, in his pause.

"Yes."

"I met her in Devonshire while I was staying there this year. I remember her mentioning your name."

He looked at her quickly. In that case why did he find himself out in the cold, with her as well as her people? Nell, to judge from her letter, had said no ill of him; she had done her best to effect an acquaintance. His eyes met Laurie's, held them a moment, and wavered. In her heart the girl said, "Coward! he cannot even face a clean-minded woman who is not under his subjection." But she was incorrect, if not over-harsh. D'Arcy could not face her physically, with her soul in arms as it was then, unless his own blood were hot. The ultra-response in him to the force of animal magnetism made him waver. Physically, he could not—mentally, he faced and challenged her. What did she mean, this girl with the grey eyes who regarded him with unspoken aversion? He carried the problem away when he left her, and brooded on it.

Fate had on the whole been kind to D'Arcy Amyas in that he had always been within reach of the thing that attracted him—or perhaps in that he had been contented with the fruit within his grasp. The women he had wanted—and won—had been somewhat of a type, and had rarely left him to make all the advances. Up till now he had never come in absolute conflict with a nice discrimination such as had looked at him out of those grey eyes which began to haunt him like a reproof. Probably there had been many Laurie Desmonds on board during past voyages, who had passed him by in silent con-

demnation, but as he had not troubled about them it had not touched his self-satisfaction. Now that a chance thing—Nell's letter—had drawn his attention, and he found himself in a *cul-de-sac* as far as pursuing any intimacy with Miss Desmond was concerned, he fancied that he was face to face with a unique experience.

He did not give it up. He tried again and yet again, and the result never differed. Polite indifference trembled on the verge of an absolute snub when he declined to be driven away, and to a man of his habits and experience it was almost incredible. Why did not the girl like him? Why should this one of all womenkind stand aloof? He did not realize that Laurie's type had always stood aloof from him, and that therefore he was seeing it now for the first time.

She would hardly accept little favours from him even, or if forced to do so showed resentment rather than gratitude. He found out by chance that she had been given one of the smaller cabins with a lady who was by no means a sailor. It was no doubt not very pleasant, but Laurie was too old a traveller to be put out by it to any great extent—she had not even tried to persuade the purser or the chief steward to find her another, knowing that the boat was fairly full. Amyas, when he learned the situation, asked her off-hand if she would not rather be alone.

"It does not matter," said the girl, with a rather proud surprise. "Mrs. Johnson is really not in my way, poor thing!"

"It cannot be very comfortable anyway," he said quietly. "I will see that it is altered."

"It is very kind of you—but there is no necessity to trouble!"

"I promised Nell Culverton to see what I could do to make the voyage passable, if we fell in with each other," he said, with the smile that drew endless lines round his eyes. Laurie was not looking at him; he could therefore read the suggestive set of her lips at his leisure.

"Come, Miss Desmond, you may at least let me make you physically comfortable," he said in the curious characteristic voice that made her shrink—not from dislike of it in itself, but because it was indissolubly connected with him, and seemed somehow a part of his personality.

She bent her head for all acceptance of his offer, and by and by found herself in possession of one of the roomiest cabins on the ship—a cabin as large as the state-rooms, which had been locked up because nobody sufficiently important had demanded it. When he asked her if she were more comfortable in her new quarters, she thanked him, but still with the chill on.

"Are you never goin' to be friends with me?" he said, lingering after her brief formal acknowledgment had tacitly dismissed him. "You ought to, for Nell's sake!"

The attack was so sudden and unlooked for that she coloured, from the curve of her soft brown hair to her firm chin. It was a sign of weakness, and he exulted in it.

"Why won't you be friends, Miss Laurie?" he said hurriedly, his voice taking its hoarse note of emotion.

Captain Amyas' friendship!

"I am sorry I cannot offer you anything but the

acquaintance which chance has forced on us!" said the girl distantly, and turned away and left him.

He set his teeth in an ugly fashion, and his eyes looked sinister. Something of the braced feeling which his nerves took under danger affected him now. He walked off to his cabin thinking, and by and by went up to the chart-room and thought still. It was a fair blue day; Amyas stood aimlessly turning over the leaves of the log-book, but he was not following the entries. Outside, the wind sang in the rigging, that little intoxicating song to which pulses leap and conscience seems to go reeling down the distance—and the sun shone on the wide clean decks of his great boat, the little realm where he was king and lord—with *one* subject at any rate whom he could not bend to do him homage! The swing of the boat under his feet was a joy to him as she dipped and lifted a little on the swell like the motion of a thoroughbred cantering over a grass course. Amyas had never lost the glamour of the sea entirely; the eternal blue ring that made his universe for nine months at least of his year was the best in life to him, in spite of its monotony. As he leaned against the wide shelf, turning the pages of the log idly, he was in a state of complete physical satisfaction—with one crumpled rose-leaf to mar his pleasure.

Laurie Desmond was the rose-leaf, and she had quite unintentionally roused an irritated interest in herself that was rapidly quickening into excitement within the narrow bounds of 'board ship life, which is the best forcing-house in the world for such things. Amyas could not get away from his half-reluctant attraction—Laurie could not get away from her

distaste. They were forced to act on each other like the friction which produces furnace heat in time. The girl certainly never gave him the least opportunity to make any way with her, and her people seemed equally intent on preventing it, he acknowledged savagely. It was therefore a surprise which was almost a shock when Miss Desmond one day knocked at his cabin door and came in deliberately when she saw him alone.

"This is an unexpected pleasure!" he said, swinging his arm-chair round for her a little. "I didn't expect you to ever honour me so far, Miss Laurie! I should have asked you long ago if I had."

"Yes," said the girl simply. She particularly disliked Amyas' way of using the less formal title "Miss Laurie," well knowing that it needed a hair's breadth only to encourage him to drop the "Miss." Her full name was "St. Lawrence," the whim of an eccentric father who had lived—and loved—in a place of that name. It had been softened to Laurie for home use, and to hear it from Amyas' lips seemed to her to defile it. She let it pass on this occasion only because she did not wish to lose time.

"I have something very difficult to say to you," she said, in a characteristically direct fashion. "But it seems to me so serious that I could not have it on my mind, if—anything happened."

He looked at her keenly, his light brows knotting over his gloomy eyes, but he said nothing.

"You took a girl named Cherry Benson to Durban," began Laurie hurriedly. She could not look at him, and the blood rushed away from her face, leaving it whiter and whiter as she went on. "I am not wishing to refer to—to your private concerns, I

assure you. I wish I had not to speak of the subject at all. The only thing necessary to be said is that she is in terrible trouble, and—and her father has sworn to take the life of the man who caused it—somehow."

His face went a dull red as hers had gone white, and his eyes were resentful. But her obvious earnestness struck another chord in him after the first shock of her words. He felt the sickness of facing danger, and gasped before the courage which always followed it.

"He does not know who you are—yet," she went on, her voice dropping lower and lower. "But it must come out sooner or later. You can see for yourself."

He moistened his lips, and drew his breath again with returning hardihood.

"The girl——" he began.

"No!" she flashed out at him, her grey eyes blazing. "Women are not such cowards—they leave that to men! They *love*—and if they fall it is for love, not for vice. If Cherry died she would die with your name unspoken."

"Yet *you* knew!"

"She told me, poor little girl!—poor, poor little girl!" The tears came suddenly, quenching the fierce anger in her eyes. "Oh, why did you do it?" she said, her voice like a moan of pain. "Can you realize how young she is? It means all her life gone!"

His face grew dark red again and more sullen. His eyes were half furtive, half appealing as they looked at her.

"I suppose you think me a blackguard!" was all he said.

She looked him squarely between the eyes. "Yes!" she answered simply.

He shrank a little, and gave a slight uneasy laugh. "Then there is no more to be said. I suppose I must thank you for warnin' me, as you seem to have taken some probably braggin' threat for deadly earnest. By the way, considerin' your opinion of me I can't quite see why you took all this trouble. I should have thought another blackguard wiped off the face of the earth would have been a good riddance, from your point of view!"

"You are a fellow-creature, and a human being," she said quietly, with some disdain in her level eyelids. "I would not let a dog go to a death I saw waiting for it without making an effort to save it. It does not matter to me what you are morally—it is not my business; as I honestly believe that you are in danger of your life, I thought it my only course to warn you. It has not been a pleasant task—I wish the whole matter had never come into my life!"

There was no mistaking the truth of that statement. He winced inwardly while he stood aside with perfect courtesy to let her pass. "Thank you," he said, and lifted the curtain for her to leave the cabin as if she had been a princess who had honoured him with a visit.

Then he sat down to the writing-table again, and leaned his head on his hands, thinking. It was strange how things chanced—that this girl of all others should be the one to find him out. It explained her attitude towards himself entirely, to Amyas' mind, for his philosophy did not admit of a natural shrinking or repugnance from a woman to a man—certainly not to him when he had

bestowed his favour. As to Cherry, he was sorry —very sorry, because he had not deliberately gone to work to harm her. He had merely followed his inclinations, not thinking—not calculating, indeed, whether in her case it might not end in disaster. The women with whom he had mostly had to do had known how to take care of themselves—Cherry had simply come to grief through inexperience, from his point of view. It was a pity, but he did not rise to the highflown idea that he had ruined her life. She would get over it and live it down, particularly in such an untrammelled place as the Colony, and would know better next time. As to marrying her, the thought never entered his head. He could not marry —unless he wished to break the tie between himself and Lady Arthur Hyde to which he attributed most of his "luck." He had re-forged that tie at the maiden-voyage luncheon five years ago, and had been in closer communication with his "Good Angel" since, than he was before. Lady Arthur had made a voyage in the *Princess*, and he had visited at her house in London, besides letters which passed between them. D'Arcy wrote well, and the lady was no less worthy a correspondent. They were daintily careful not to incriminate any one, just as when they met they kept their intercourse with a carefully conventional side to the world.

No, he could not marry. He did not wish to, even though it had been a more suitable woman than Cherry. As to Benson, he might never find out; or if he did he could waste his wrath in blind threats. Amyas had no wish to encounter his old mate in his wrath, or to have a scene; it would be extremely disagreeable, if nothing worse. But he was not

inclined to overvalue Benson or his threats, though for the moment Laurie's own terror had infected him. He could not see, as she did, the brutal, baffled face in her memory, snarling like a dog's—like a dog, too, hunting down its prey with an insatiable thirst for the quarry's life.

On the whole the disagreeable incident began to fade out of its first vividness in D'Arcy's mind, and indeed to leave a certain satisfaction behind it. It established an understanding between him and St. Lawrence Desmond, who at least knew the worst of him—at all events in her own opinion. That it would fatally prejudice her against him he did not really believe; women had always been lenient in their judgment of him, and though their knowledge had not been quite so emphatic and startling perhaps as Laurie's, still they must have recognized his lapses from virtue. He found the girl's undesired discovery about him rather piquant on the whole; he knew instinctively that she would keep his secret, but it was hers too now none the less, and she could not get rid of it.

Laurie Desmond, as she left the cabin, felt her knees tremble under her and her breath came short. In the excitement of speaking she had not recognized what a delicate subject she was handling, but as she looked back she quivered at her own audacity. Amyas' half-shamed, half-defiant air recurred to her as the male protest against feminine interference, and she was thankful to him for his silence so far as words went. He could have said intolerable things that would have humbled her in her turn. She did him the justice to acknowledge that in outward semblance he was a gentleman. He could have flatly denied it too, and he had not; denial would not have convinced

her, for Cherry's confession had borne the brand of hideous truth; but she felt that if he had bragged it out it would have been a step yet lower in his degradation. She was too young a woman to make any appeal to him for the girl; the desperate effort to speak to him of the catastrophe at all had been as much as she could do, and having warned him she washed her hands of the affair without daring to suggest the remedy of marriage.

There was no alteration in her manner towards him from that day, except an increasing silence, but she found to her relief that he no longer persisted in talking to her. If he joined a group where she was, he did not address a single remark to her, though he chatted as usual with those around. A little feeling of disdainful pity began to lighten her opinion of him; once or twice she caught him looking at her, furtively, she thought, and nearly broke her own guard by trying to reassure him with a brief sentence. She thought he feared betrayal, and that she never intended. Another cause for her unbending was the memory of Nell's story as they sat in the moist Devon lane, with the languid sunshine and the balmy airs round them. Laurie remembered Dolly and the boy who loved her, and her heart softened to Amyas for the sake of his former self. It was the tragedy of his loss which had first driven him downwards; "I saw that he was only a devil!" Nell had said, and Laurie's heart began to ache for pity. She liked the present Amyas no better than before, but her womanhood expanded its quality of ready forgiveness, and found generous excuses She was beginning to learn the lesson that Nell and Mrs. Desmond had foreseen for her.

D'Arcy was quick to notice signs in his favour, but he took advantage of them slowly. He still preserved his humble attitude, conscious that he had something more delicate to deal with than his experience had held before. Without recognizing a beginning, Laurie drifted into a salutation day by day—"Good-morning," or "Good-night," bound her to nothing. But it did not stop there, of course; remarks of mere courtesy lengthened into brief conversations as they met on the common ground of the promenade deck or the saloons; conversations developed into arguments, and there D'Arcy's good genius came to his rescue. His life had given him opportunities to think, and he spoke as one having authority. Laurie, as against her will, was drawn into appreciation and enjoyment by those quasi-artistic qualities which lay at the back of Amyas' nature as a second line of defence.

"Your uncle thinks you talk too much to the Captain," said Mrs. Desmond with a dry smile, when the boat was yet some days from England.

Laurie coloured resentfully. "You know I do not like him," she said.

"Well, other people cannot guess that when they see you together. They never notice Captain Amyas with a woman but they suppose he is making love to her!"

"He never attempts such a thing with me at least, whatever he may do to others. If he had said a word——"

"I know. You would have shut him up, and turned your back on him for evermore. He is clever enough to know that. What *does* he talk about?"

"Anything and everything in heaven and earth,

except personalities. He is really a thinker, and something of an artist. Have you seen his sketches?"

"No; he has not invited me into his cabin as yet!"

"Aunty! I should not have gone. He brought his sketch-book out here one morning in the face of the whole deck. It was perfectly public."

"Oh yes, of course. I forgot the man's feline subtleties. I don't suppose he will offer you the hospitality of his own room, unless he does it at the last as a final try on."

Laurie did not answer, and the colour in her face her aunt mistook for anger. Her own intrusion into Amyas' cabin she had never mentioned, and Mrs. Desmond had not been on deck at the time. To explain the whole thing would have involved Cherry, and a yet blacker mark against Amyas' character. Laurie did not realize that she was trying to shield him, but it had come to that.

He exercised a certain fascination over her that was hardly to be called liking; but his voice with its curious accent had begun to linger in her memory, and his presence made her vaguely unhappy. He had never attempted so much as a personal remark, though there were few things they had not discussed as generalities, until the evening before they reached Southampton. It was a cold night, and white with moonlight. Laurie was sitting beside Mrs. Desmond, who was chatting with another lady; the girl was not talking herself, not even reading. She sat with her face turned to the toss of the black water polished with moonlight, and her thoughts drifted restlessly to her past and her present. She seemed to have learned something during this trip, and to be passing from an elementary existence to a more emphatic

one. It was painful, and yet she recognized its necessity. She had up till now only half realized a world which she had known so well in theory, and was wrestling to get free of her own swaddling bands.

Her face, framed in the fluffy shawl thrown over her head, looked grave to sternness as she sat there, not frowning, but with something like a shadow on the clear forehead, above which her soft hair was parted on one side, and fell in a thick wave back over her ears. Captain Amyas, passing up the deck, paused by her side and looked down at her.

"I have found the drawin' you wanted to see, Miss Desmond," he said, "if you care to come and look at it."

"Where is it?"

"In my cabin."

Mrs. Desmond turned her head and gave her niece a scarcely perceptible glance. She remembered with some amusement her own prophecy. Amyas was really "trying it on at the last moment"! Laurie remembered too, and hesitated for just the time during which she looked straight up into his eyes as he stood above her. There was not so much an appeal there as a demand. "I have something to tell you—I want to speak to you," he said, without opening his lips. She always wondered afterwards whether it were some power of animal magnetism that made her rise from her seat and follow him. She was not given to impulses, and up till then he had never had the slightest influence over her.

Mrs. Desmond looked after them, and hesitated in her turn. The action was so unprecedented from Laurie that she hardly knew what to do. Her husband would not like it, but the girl was too old

to treat her as a child and follow her, and too independent besides. Mrs. Desmond leaned back in her chair again, and continued her conversation with a mental glance at her watch. In five minutes, if Laurie did not return, she must go and see what they were doing.

A few rough water-coloured drawings of the natives of Madagascar lay on the table in the cabin. The women's faces were handsome, with fairer skins than Laurie had expected, and blue eyes. As she took one in her hand she was conscious of an undercurrent of excitement, and a premonition that this trivial reason for her presence here was by no means all. Amyas had laid the sketches on the table as an obvious excuse; but he had asked her to come because he had something to say. She wondered suddenly if it had anything to do with Cherry, and glanced round the cabin, while still holding the drawings in her hand, with a reluctant realization of how horridly familiar this place must have been to the little sobbing figure that haunted her thoughts like a nightmare. There was nothing in the surroundings to jar on her taste, and everything to satisfy it, for Amyas' native love of art stood him in good stead here. The upholsteries were all in dark blue, unobtrusive, and harmonious with the walnut fittings; a kaross made of the skins of the Cape jackal was flung over the berth, and there were engravings on the walls—"L'Angélus," which Laurie loved, and Turner's "Fighting Téméraire." She had expected nude figures, but Amyas kept his appreciation of such out of sight of the general public. He was no fool.

"This is very clever," she said with mechanical courtesy, laying down one sketch and taking up

another. She did not look at him, for she was still thinking of the room which was so intimately his, and which she had not noticed on her first visit to it, on which occasion her purpose had absorbed her. How was it that with such a mind as he must have he could conceal its innate coarseness, and feign an appreciation of the grave purity of "L'Angélus"? she wondered. Laurie's very single-mindedness hampered her in judging such a complex character as Amyas'.

He followed her up to the table, and took the drawings away from her suddenly, with a complete alteration in his manner. The indifference of every-day intercourse was gone; he was horribly in earnest, as she noticed with vague surprise—noticed too that it gave him a new and dominant power. There is no strength quite so imperious and overwhelming as that of a nervous nature which does not always possess it. It is like a fire from the gods, given only in moments of inspiration, and during its brief periods it sweeps all before it.

"I want to speak to you about the last time you came in here," he said with tense resolution. Laurie had expected that, and was ready for it; but for the next words she was not prepared. "I've been thinkin' it over, and I want to know why you did it?"

"Why I did it?" she echoed. "Because—because I thought I ought. I believed there was danger."

"Well, what did that matter to you? Why should you concern yourself with it?"

She wished with all her soul that she could give way to the little scornful laugh she had heard other women use like a two-edged sword. A ready laugh is a keen weapon, and she who can use it easily and

naturally is armed at all points. Laurie, from training, never laughed audibly; she was quick to see humour, and could smile readily, but she rarely laughed outright. She could not now, when she most wished it. She stood still and felt her own helplessness, while she realized that Amyas was construing her conscientious warning into some special interest in himself! She could not make him understand in one merciful gleam of mockery. All she could do was to speak in a stiff constrained fashion which rather defeated its own ends.

"Common humanity made it my concern. Perhaps I was morbid and overstrained, but I really thought —I feared——"

"I can't help thinkin'—hopin'—that you did it for a kinder reason!" The words came with a rush, but with suppressed passion, and she found to her dismay that he could look her in the face now! More, that she had to turn her own eyes away.

"I did not!—I did not!" she repeated in confusion and distress, and of course he did not believe her.

"Are you sure, Laurie?"

The words were a whisper as he grasped both her hands in one of his and flung his arm half round her. With a sickening sense of shame—a memory of the many similar scenes this cabin must have mutely witnessed—she drew herself free and stepped back, her shoulders set against the woodwork of the berth, as if she were at bay.

"You are quite mistaken.—I don't like you—I am ashamed to think of you even!" she said bluntly. "I warned you because I thought it right, but I hated to mix myself up in such a story, and I wanted to have nothing to do with you!"

He remained looking at her, baffled and disconcerted. He had met opposition before, and overcome it. But it was the opposition of intended yielding, an invitation to try again. This was horrified, blank denial, and he felt it. He looked at her with such eyes as the boy D'Arcy had shown to the arbitrators of his fate many years ago, when he had thought that they threatened to refuse him to the sea.

"Can't you?" he said hoarsely. "I want you so much! I've never met any one quite like you. You don't really hate me?"

She pressed herself back against her support, shrinking from the outstretched hand that sought to touch her, and she answered him with rigid honesty as the only defence which she felt to be sure.

"No, I do not hate you exactly. When we meet on neutral ground I try to forget what I—what I know about you, and regard you as any other chance acquaintance. But when you presume to overstep the barrier by one inch I cannot help remembering, and then—yes, I almost *loathe* you! Perhaps you cannot understand, and I have no right to judge you, but to my mind you are not fit——"

"Laurie!" said a woman's voice,—there was a tap at the door; Amyas pulled himself together and turned round.

"Oh! is my niece here?" said Mrs. Desmond. "Laurie dear, it is getting quite late! Come along; we shall be up early to-morrow."

"I am looking at Captain Amyas' sketches, aunty," said the girl composedly. "I am coming now. Good-night, Captain."

Mrs. Desmond turned to leave the cabin; Laurie followed her, trying to pass the outstretched hand in

her way. He did not speak, but the appeal was none the less insistent. She hesitated, moved back, and held out her own indifferently. Amyas glanced at the retreating lady, who might turn at any moment; he did not risk bending his head to kiss the resisting hand, but lifting it before she guessed his intention he laid the cool palm against his burnt, bearded face for an instant before she could snatch it away. It seemed to her in her furious anger that it had been worse than a kiss, more familiar.

She was ever afterwards horribly ashamed of the impulse that made her lock her cabin door that night, but that final incident of their interview had increased her distrust of Amyas to a feeling of absolute fear, and, thanks to him, she had the cabin to herself. After all she had said, he had dared to take a liberty with her that no man in her life had taken heretofore. She was accustomed to so far overawe the opposite sex by her very incredulity of an approach without invitation, that it seemed to her that D'Arcy was no more to be classed with his fellows than a madman. That he was equally incapable of realizing her rebuffs all at once she did not understand. Had the voyage not come to an end the following day she would have told Colonel Desmond the whole story, even though she was reluctant to do so, and put the matter in his hands to defend her from further annoyance. As it happened, however, they reached England without any other development of the situation, and she said good-bye to the ship and all its memories with infinite relief.

CHAPTER XV

"What have you learned? The stress of the shore,
The deep sea's desperate strife,
Some secret knowledge of men and things
And the undertow of life.

Found you no happiness anywhere
In the countries where you roved?
Once, only once,—a handful of nights—
With one whom I met and loved."

LAURENCE HOPE.

IT was not often that Fate had said a plain "No!" to D'Arcy Amyas. He had been somewhat of a spoiled child in trivial ways, and, like all spoiled children, a sudden curb was far more cruel to him than to those used to restraint.

When Laurie left him he went back to the bridge—had it not been an unusually calm passage he would have been there all the evening—and after a few words with the two Officers then on duty (for the watch was doubled), walked off by himself and stood looking out over the black water, moon-crested, cut into sharp opaque ridges. He was not thinking of his great boat and the fifteen hundred lives for which he was responsible, at the moment. The *Princess* was doing her duty, making her way homeward beneath her master's foot as docilely as a perfectly-trained steed. The mysterious feeling of being in touch with that great thunderous mass of solid material and stored force never left him; it comforted

him a little now as the obedient Thing with its metaphorical feminine gender swept him through the rebellious seas holding her back. His own boat! Something of a consort to him in an intangible way—a lasting tie that kept his love through the lighter passions which bound him to successive women for a time.

But a pang went through him at the memory of his last final failure. He had set a half-reluctant desire on Laurie, and her absolute denial had fanned a faint flame into force and fury. Why should this one of all his fancies turn a deaf ear to him? He must have it—he wanted it *so badly!* The old imperious craving which beset him when he thought he might be denied his boyish desire, swept back over him with just as unreasonable a force. Some of his impotent anguish when he lost Dolly owed its sting no doubt to the sense that his passionate longing was hopeless; Dolly was out of his reach for ever, and he could not regain her though he wished it never so badly!

It was really a relief to him when the *Princess* touched land and Laurie was safely gone away out of his life. Her presence kept up the fret and irritation; he could not give up the pursuit of his object, or believe that she would finally refuse him some slight mark of favour, though the time left them was so short. A kiss or so, the melting and yearning of the cold grey eyes, the right of touch, and—it was one and the same to D'Arcy Amyas—the licence of touch to follow; that was all he could hope to snatch in a few hurried moments. But even the briefest of such pleasures was beyond his power to compass, and

Laurie left the boat and went away untamed and relentless. He thrust the memory out of his mind when he was no longer kept confident by her actual presence, and she was equally glad to forget what was to her distasteful throughout. So they went their several ways, which utterly diverged, and left no visible mark of their passing intimacy on each other's personalities ; yet a new experience had come to one of them at least, though unrealized as yet. D'Arcy would never think of Laurie Desmond as of the other women in his life. The memory might gall him, but he was forced to set her apart as something that had shaken his own self-confidence. He did not believe that she would have kept her attitude of resistance finally ; but the fact remained that she had kept it during their short acquaintance. She had set up a new standard in his life by which to judge women, and he accepted it in spite of himself.

Laurie's life lay in different grooves to any Amyas could conceive, and dealt with old interests in which he had no part—she found it easy enough to drop his mere memory as she would have done some unclean thing. If he ever recurred to her mind, it was with a momentary surprise at herself that she had endured him without active hatred, and a somewhat reluctant acknowledgment of his more attractive side. For Amyas' worst nature had not always been in the ascendant, though it was strong to overwhelm the good in him in a crisis, and had been the ruling power in his life. His personal courage and facility of resource were the only obvious traits on which the most merciful critic could lay stress, and they though known only to himself, hung upon a slender

chance; but it was not animal attributes, or even virtues, that Laurie recognized in him as something likeable. It was the D'Arcy that might have been—the possible development of the photograph that Nell had shown her, that she fancied she recognized, and regretted; a less physically healthy man perhaps, but one with sounder mind. It never occurred to her that a nature so fatally responsible to sex could have been influenced for good as well as for ill. D'Arcy was a weak man, but had there been one woman in his life strong enough to deny while she was tender to love and pity, he might have been as entirely given over to virtue as he was to vice. For women are the making or the marring of a man. When we see him ruined, by whatever vices, we may know that the women influencing his life have failed in their task. St. Lawrence Desmond, strong enough to love the right herself and hate the wrong as she saw it, did not recognize a claim on her own self-reliance to hold a helping hand to a weaker nature. She was serenely satisfied to condemn the sinners with whom she would hold no communication; their possible conversion did not suggest itself to her so much as her own possible defilement.

Twelve months after she had parted with him, Fate thrust D'Arcy Amyas under her notice again, and she resolutely turned away. Laurie was, as already stated, singularly free of relations; besides Colonel and Mrs. Desmond, her step-brother was really the only one who had any claim on her by blood ties. He was a somewhat delicate youth, a year or so younger than herself, and it was suddenly discovered that the state of his lungs demanded a

warmer climate than England's. All the influence in the family was called upon, with the result that a berth was found for him in Natal, and he was to start at once for—Durban, of all places upon earth! In the course of a month or so he could proceed to his final destination, which was some way north of 'Maritzburg, but it being deemed unwise for him to face another English winter, he was to go out at once to Durban, and on account of his health his step-sister was advised to go with him, and see him established in the Colony. It was no part of the scheme that Laurie should take up her residence permanently in South Africa, there being no place for her with Arnold after he went up country; but for the time he would spend in Durban she was to keep house for him, and, it was hoped, see him on the high-road to recovery before he went inland and she returned home.

Laurie accepted the responsibility thrust upon her with characteristic steadfastness, consenting cheerfully to go out to Africa again, and only using all her quiet influence that the passage should be made in a mail boat to Cape Town, and on by rail if Arnold disliked the longer and more tedious journey which these boats made up the coast. Arnold, boylike, pleaded for Savernakes' line; he said that they catered especially for the amusement of the passengers, for whom it was like a pleasure cruise, and that he might as well get all the fun out of it that he could, seeing he was going to be banished to a half-civilized land. But on that point Laurie was firm. She would run no risk on Savernakes' line of an encounter with Amyas, who might

have changed his boat though she avoided the *Princess*, and she persisted for the mail, so the mail it was which took them out to Cape Town, whither they proceeded to Durban by rail.

The month or so's life in Durban seemed like a sunshiny dream to both brother and sister. It was not yet oppressively hot, and there was still sufficient gaiety in the city to divert them. They came out armed with introductions, and soon found themselves involved in that friendly social life of the Colony that seems so intoxicating to the English visitor, fresh from the more laborious pleasure-seeking under murky skies and in a more constrained circle. Every one seemed on terms of easy familiarity in their set in Durban, and their sojourn had that unstable atmosphere which lent it the air of one long picnic.

Some of the sunshine of her new surroundings seemed to visibly affect Laurie; she grew to look younger and less grave, and her smile was more ready if her laugh was still a silent one. She had almost lost her first dark impressions of Africa when a letter in an unknown hand one day revived them. It had been home to England, and positively came out again, for it hailed from Bulawayo. It was written in a rather illiterate hand, though it was not misspelt, and came, Laurie discovered, from Cherry's aunt, the hard-featured woman whom she had driven out of the room. The letter was brief and to the point; it was only written to tell Miss Desmond, who had seemed to feel an affection for her, that Cherry was dead. She had been very ill when her child was born, and a merciful fever had wiped out

both frail lives about twelve months later. It was a stiff letter, badly expressed, but not intentionally unsympathetic, though there was a note of practical resignation about it that suggested that the writer felt that such an ending to the tragedy was the best that could have been hoped. It appeared that Cherry had at the last spoken wistfully of her old school friend, and wished she could have seen her again; but Laurie's name was the only one to which she referred. The letter finished, however, with a strange hint at danger still brooding—

"And her father is as set on bringing *him* to book as ever, though he never could find out who it were all this time. It's to be hoped that if he can prove enough to face him with it something will keep them apart; for I think he's got a hint at last, and he's like a madman about it all."

Laurie put down the letter with a shudder. It struck a jarring note in the sunshine, and she thought with equal shrinking of the poor little life sacrificed (what a deathbed, set round with harsh reproachful faces, and perhaps no voice to comfort or reassure!) and of the dark cloud following Cherry's betrayer. Why would not Amyas be warned? She could do nothing more—she did not wish to ever mix herself up with the matter again. She put his very name out of her thoughts at last, with a resolution that she was no further responsible. "I have meddled more already than most people would have felt bound to do," she thought disgustedly. "How I hate men whose own vice lies at the root of such entanglements!"—and she forgot him until, curiously enough, her step-brother recalled the repugnant personality

by asking her on what boat she would return to England after he had left her.

"You had better go in the *Princess*," he happened to say, laughing, for he knew vaguely her opinion of the famous Liner, without being aware of any particular cause for it, or her personal acquaintance with Amyas. Savernakes' crack boat had by this time a certain reputation which did not accord with Laurie's Puritan principles. Shipowners may or may not know of these things, for sometimes there are veiled complaints of a Master, whether it be manners or morals that have clashed with the passengers. But if his name is filed for reference or not, he will be discussed without varnish in the ports at which he touches and is necessarily known. Even Arnold Desmond had heard of D'Arcy Amyas, and used his name, as a matador uses the red scarf, to tease his sister.

"Don't talk nonsense!" said Laurie, with serene certainty of herself.

She would have said, honestly enough, if she had felt such a statement necessary, that there did not exist the power on earth that would make her take passage in the *Princess* after her memories of the boat, travelling independently as she was now. But women are never independent agents, because their compassion, or their maternal instincts, or some other gracious trait that makes them belovedly weak, acts as the counterpoise, and destroys the singleness of their will. Laurie found her fate's agent at the Royal Hotel, to which she went, when Arnold started up country, for the short space that must elapse before she had arranged her passage. That she had not settled her own affairs before her brother left was due

to her whole soul being absorbed in him to the exclusion of a thought of self. She made her own plans so secondary that she did not waste time over them until he was fairly gone. Then she took a room at the Royal, whither the friends she had made in Durban recommended her, and began to think of her own departure.

She was a little distressed at her independent position in her secret heart, for used as she was to being her own mistress, she had never applied her liberty to going to hotels. Laurie was rather fastidiously feminine, and objected to such masculine attention as threatened her from her isolated position at the Royal. For this reason she made quiet advances to the only other lady whom she saw to be in the same predicament as herself—a retiring pale woman, with colourless hair and eyes, whose face was so stamped with ill-health that she appealed doubly to Laurie through the medium of pity as well as her own necessity. She seemed thankful also for some one to speak to, and explained her situation to Laurie in a tone of helpless pathos.

Her name was Mildred Hyde, and she had been a governess in Natal for two years, but the climate had not suited her, and the final breakdown had been caused by a sharp attack of fever. She was going back to barren prospects in England, with ruined health and a future dark enough to depress any woman ; but her condition was further aggravated by an absolute terror of the voyage. She had been very ill coming out, and in her present state of health was convinced that she should die, without a friend on board to be near her.

It was natural to Laurie Desmond to accept the part of consoler as simply as if it were a trust confided to her. The mental force of her own steadfast nature acted upon poor ailing Mildred Hyde far more efficiently than a physical remedy. It was some time before the final cause of her depression was made clear to Laurie; but going to her room under pretence of borrowing some small feminine loan, she found the older woman crying from sheer fright, and drew the cause of her terror from her.

"But you must not let yourself give in to it like this," she said gently. "There is not the least reason why the voyage should not do you good rather than harm, if you have a smooth passage, as they generally do at this time of year. I am going home soon also, and I am not anticipating being ill in the least."

"You are going home!" A flash of utter relief came into Miss Hyde's dull eyes. "I feared you had just come out. Oh, if you are on the same boat I am comforted. You do not know what a relief it is to me to think that you will also be on board the *Princess!*"

A sudden change came over the strong, gentle young face at which she looked. Laurie did not speak, she had not the heart to destroy the hope in the suffering eyes by absolute words, but Mildred Hyde read her denial with the quickness of her anxiety.

"You are not coming! You do not sail in that ship! Then there is no hope for me."

"Could you not put off your return for a week?" said Laurie patiently. "There are reasons why I

cannot sail in the *Princess*, but I should be as glad as you to know that we were to be together, if you could alter your passage."

Miss Hyde's face flushed and paled distressfully. "I cannot for many reasons," she faltered. "I cannot afford to stay on here for one thing, and for another I should offend the relation who is paying my passage if I did not go in the boat he has chosen. He is a harsh man, and peculiar, but he is wealthy, and my only hope of help is with him."

Laurie stood quietly by the window, looking out over the deserted garden and its sub-tropical trees and winding paths. Her face was set, and her resolved tone carried the conviction of despair to her hearer's heart.

"Then I am very sorry, but I am afraid we are not to be fellow-passengers," she said.

"Of course I cannot expect you to alter your own plans to mine," said Mildred Hyde humbly.

She accepted the untowardness of Fate with the resignation of one well used to such disappointments. But the monotonous tone haunted Laurie's dreams all night. The girl fought a hard battle with herself before the morning, for a decision was necessary one way or another at once—the *Princess* sailed at four o'clock next day. After all, who was she, Laurie Desmond, to set her private prejudices against such urgent need of help and protection as was thrown in her way in the person of this ailing woman? Laurie was as tender to the afflicted whom she considered innocent, as she was hard to the sinner. A little disagreeableness for herself there might be, but it was a selfish reason to stand in the way of her helping

a fellow-creature. If St. Lawrence Desmond was stringent for others, she was not indulgent to herself.

"You can do this thing," she said, facing her own reluctance in the still grey of the early morning that found her sleepless, sitting up in bed with wide young eyes watching for the day. "It is not pleasant—no doubt that type of man will make it objectionable to any extent in his power, until he learns that it is no use. But you are surely strong enough to hold yourself free from the least contamination. Who is D'Arcy Amyas, or any other man with loose morals, that you should fear him? Take this work that you find to your hand, and help another woman as you would like to be helped yourself!"

She went to Mildred Hyde's room with the sunrise, and it seemed to the sick woman that all the sunshine in the world came with her and smiled out of her clear eyes.

"I have changed my mind," she said. "I am sailing in the *Princess*—with you. We will stand by each other."

The time before the boat started was so mercifully full that she had no leisure in which to regret even if she would have allowed herself to do so. She had to book her passage, and to get her trunks ready, and then to get Miss Hyde on board and safely established. They shared a cabin, and, in attending to her, Laurie almost forgot her own repugnance to encounter the man in whose hands their lives were for the next three weeks.

As on that former voyage when she had first met him, she did not see Amyas at all until they were out of sight of land. The boat had already left Durban

an hour before she was free, for she had thought it better to persuade the invalid to go straight to bed, and had busied herself with arranging their mutual belongings and attending to her comfort while the majority of the passengers were still on deck, waving to friends on the retreating tug, and taking part in that kind of funeral festivity peculiar to a boat's departure. After a while she heard feet coming down the alleyways—cabin doors banged, and the sound of laughing and talking. People were coming down to open their trunks before the bugle warned them to dress for dinner. Laurie was a good sailor, but the cabin was close, and she was afraid for the first time that she might be ill and consequently unable to look after her companion. Miss Hyde had dropped peacefully asleep, and the decks would be empty, so Laurie decided to go up for a breath of air and return to her charge later on. She did not intend to appear at dinner, but hoped, by asking the stewardess to bring it to their cabin, to induce Mildred to follow her example and eat some also.

With light fleet feet she passed through the saloon and up the main companion. The sunset was still flooding the deck, and some reflection of its light stole down into the great dining-room and was not dispersed by the few lights at present turned on. It gave a hushed twilit feeling to the ship, and the sense of mystery wrapped Laurie round as she stepped out of the deckhouse into the full glow. Sea and sky and ship had been all transfigured, but the glory was fading rapidly; overhead the heavens were changing to a cold clear blue, and the sea was polished indigo, solid to the eye, each ridge of moving water faintly

burnished with the pink out of the west. Through a new heaven and a new earth the *Princess* seemed rushing on into eternity.

Laurie walked for'ard mechanically, and leaned on the rail which bounded the promenade deck. She forgot that she was so near the object of her avoidance, though she stood close to his own room. The Captain's cabin on the *Princess* was not on the boat deck; it stood under the bridge, flanked on either side by the deck cabins of the more important passengers; but Laurie little heeded that closed door behind which might lurk her tragic fate. She was absorbed in the sky and the sea, and the little soft wind which blew from the sunset and lifted her hair softly from her serious face.

She was roused by one of the doors of the passengers' cabins banging, and a step that sounded on the deck behind her. It paused, hesitated, and then approached, and she turned to see a portly figure in clerical dress, a fine grey head, and shrewd eyes with a twinkle in them. Laurie liked this gentleman's appearance, and her eyes welcomed him; she liked too the cordial frank tone in which he spoke.

"A beautiful evening for our start."

"Yes, I was just thinking so," said the girl, still leaning a little against the rail, on which he had also steadied his elbow as he stood at her side.

"I hope you are not feeling unwell already?" he said quizzically, with a glance at her fresh, unconcerned face.

"Oh no; but I think it is wiser to be in the open air at first, and I had not been up on deck since we joined the boat. I have a lady with me who is an

invalid," she explained. "I got her to bed as soon as possible, and have been unpacking since."

"I hope her illness will not prevent your appearing at dinner."

For the first time Laurie almost regretted that it would. The kindly tone attracted her, and she felt that with the moral support of this new friend she could face even that dreaded figure at the head of the Captain's table.

"I am afraid I shall not be there to-night," she said, shaking her head. "I shall have my dinner in my cabin with Miss Hyde."

"Oh, well, you must come up on deck afterwards then. Your friend will have gone to sleep, and you mustn't mope indoors all the evening—we can't have it!"

"I hope," said Laurie impulsively, "that when we do appear we shall sit at your table!"

"I shall make a point of it. I am an old friend of the Chief Officer, Mr. Lambert, and when I travel on this boat I always sit on his right. I shall keep the two places next me for you and your friend when we settle out seats to-night, if I may?"

"Please do."

"My name," he said, producing a pocket-book and opening it with a certain fastidious deliberation, "is Melville. I am the vicar of St. Jervoise, in Wiltshire. Now, if you will tell me yours I shall not forget it."

"I am St. Lawrence Desmond, and my friend is Mildred Hyde."

"Both Miss's?" he asked with comically-lifted brows.

"Yes, both," said Laurie, laughing.

"I am relieved——" began Mr. Melville, and then turned quickly and looked over his shoulder. "Good-evening, Captain," he said, in the same pleasant voice with which he spoke to Laurie.

The door of Amyas' cabin had been flung back, the curtain lifted, and he himself stepped out smartly on the deck. Laurie's limbs gave a traitorous shudder, and she put her hand on the rail again to steady them. In spite of her will to rally her forces, her nerves acknowledged Amyas' presence as she would fain have forbidden their doing. She forced herself to turn and face him calmly, her lovely grey eyes—the only real beauty of her face—resting a moment on his big person in its blue cloth. The Company's badge glimmered on his cap, and the Company's gold lace barred his sleeve above the snowy wristband; otherwise he was a Naval man for smartness and quiet swagger.

He had acknowledged the clergyman's greeting with a swift salute; it was his business to be "hail fellow" with every passenger on board, nevertheless it was a known fact that Captain Amyas hated the Church of England as he did no other existing body, and that, cordial as he might appear, he would rather welcome any other profession on his boat than the clergy. A "parson" was always a whited sepulchre in his eyes, and he condemned them as hypocrites worse than his frankly heathen self. He was not going to stop now to speak to Mr. Melville, but habit made him turn his eyes on the lady to discover who it was. He checked in his swing down the deck, looked again out of narrowing eyes as if he could not believe it, and turned back.

"Miss Desmond," he said, lifting his cap from the sunny head that was as yet undimmed by any silver hair. "I did not know you were on board."

He held out his hand and she offered her own in unsmiling salutation. With Mr. Melville looking on it was impossible to refuse. But she did not speak.

"Your name is not on the passenger list," he said.

"I came on board at the last moment—I mean I booked in this boat at the last moment."

"Colonel and Mrs. Desmond are not with you this time?"

"No. I am with a friend—a lady who is an invalid. It was on her account that I hurried off to-day. Otherwise I was going to wait for the next boat." She spoke clearly, weighing the words. There should be no mistake between them. Remembering that last occasion when he had contrived to get her into his cabin, she was determined that he should realize her reluctance to sail in his ship.

"I see," he said, and his lips smiled a little. "We are delighted to have you as a passenger, however, under any conditions."

"I am trying to persuade Miss Desmond to come down to dinner," said Mr. Melville, "but she is bent on devoting herself to her friend."

"The stewardess will look after her," said Amyas, with the careless authority of a Liner despot. "Or I will send the doctor if you are anxious, Miss Desmond. But you must not miss your dinner."

"Thank you; I prefer having it with Miss Hyde in the cabin."

"Come, don't be wilful! In Mrs. Desmond's absence we feel bound to look after you. I shall keep

an empty seat for you, and you will change your mind."

"Too late, Captain!" said Mr. Melville with a jolly laugh. "Miss Desmond sits by me. I have secured the privilege before you."

For a moment Amyas' haughty blue eyes looked over this insignificant unit in his charge, as if he found it almost impossible to understand a passenger disputing a claim of his. Mr. Melville's cloth made it the more intolerable, and Laurie's half-unconscious movement towards him aggravated matters. He did not answer in words, but the dinner-bugle sounding he remarked that they would be late, and raising his cap again disappeared into the deckhouse.

"Our friend was not pleased!" said the clergyman, his eyes twinkling. "He is accustomed to be irresistible!"

"I am not aware of having encouraged the notion," said Laurie calmly, turning away from the saloon and towards the alleyway. Mr. Melville laughed silently to himself all the way to his table.

Miss Desmond congratulated herself during the next few days upon her snub having taken effect and her hint been accepted. She saw but little of Amyas, as, even when she got Mildred Hyde to come to meals, they sat at the Chief Officer's table. But she was mistaken in thinking that her adversary had capitulated. Amyas was brooding more sullenly over his rebuff than he ever remembered doing before. It was a new experience for him, and other details stimulated his resistance. His distorted imagination saw the old grudge revived in Mr. Melville's kindly interest in Laurie, for the clergyman was a widower,

and in spite of his grey hairs Amyas never hesitated to call him a rival. Laurie would have been disgusted, and Mr. Melville himself amazed, if they could have known the light in which their intercourse was regarded. But as it happened they both ignored the Captain for different reasons, and his opinion did not occur to them to disturb their minds.

In the midst of all his administrative talents, exercised in the guiding and governing of his ship, D'Arcy Amyas was conscious of the one woman on board to whom he was actively repugnant; further, he was all the more bent on overcoming the repugnance. Laurie's personality fretted him; he could forget her away from him, out of his reach, but when Fate tossed him such a chance as having her on his boat, unprotected even by her own people, he felt he must grasp it. It was an instinct beyond his power to control. *He wanted this—so badly that he felt he must have it!* Long since he had been rivalled by a parson too, and badly beaten—so badly that the old scar ached now at the sight of the clerical uniform. He would not be beaten again; but he went to work with all the caution and craft of many years' experience that lay between that day and this.

Laurie came on deck one day to find her own chair, which was next to Miss Hyde's, occupied by a conspicuous figure. She had been down to the library to fetch a book, and had left Mildred dozing. She was wide awake now, a little flush of gratification on her thin cheeks, evidently interested and absorbed in the big bearded man who was talking to her. The Captain's attention was an awe-inspiring thing to Mildred Hyde, and she raised herself a little among

the shawls and cushions of her long deck-chair to listen to him. Laurie stopped short, petrified, but just then Amyas rose, lifted his cap, and left her chair free again.

"The Captain has been talking to me," said Mildred breathlessly, as Laurie took the empty seat quietly.

"So I saw."

"He said if I would make an effort to come to the concert to-night, he would have the canvas rigged up so that there should be no draught. He *is* kind!"

"Is he?" said Laurie dryly.

"Don't you—admire him?" said Mildred hesitatingly. Her tone betrayed that she had been going to say "like."

"Not at all!" was Laurie's answer, softened for Mildred personally, however, by the smile in her eyes. "Come, let us go on reading and forget Captain Amyas. He does not interest me a fraction so much as 'Sir Charles Danvers.'"

But from that day Laurie found one of her bulwarks down. Amyas joined the "invalid group" when and where he chose, and Mildred's welcome excused any silence on her friend's part. He had abandoned his usual plan of sitting only at his own table on this voyage too, and exchanged for a few nights with each Officer in turn—"Played general post!" as Mr. Melville put it, laughing. When the turn came for any table that he thought dull, he generally managed to be forced to attend to his ship, and did not appear; but there was never a question about his presence in Mr. Lambert's place. He was his most charming self there, a perfect host, a genial

fellow, an excellent talker, trained by years of invaluable service. Laurie listened and wondered. Once her eyes, searching his face for some remembrance to an old faded photograph hanging on a cottage wall in far-away Trawles, encountered his own before she could avoid it. They looked at each other—the narrow blue eyes, and the wide, repellent grey. That night he stopped her as she was gathering Mildred's shawls together and about to follow her charge, who had already left the deck.

"Don't go, Miss Desmond," he pleaded, standing in her path so that she needs must wait. "Sit down for a minute and speak to me. You never give me a chance to talk to you!"

"Miss Hyde is waiting for me—excuse me, Captain Amyas."

"I have just said good-night to Miss Hyde, and she knows I am keepin' you. It is not good for you to be always in that stuffy cabin. Won't you give me a few minutes?"

She looked at him, with a feeling that brutal honesty was her only course.

"Frankly—I would rather not!"

"You have not forgiven me for kissin' your hand?"

It had been worse than that in her estimation—he should not have referred to it. Now her momentary hesitation was gone—now she felt she almost wanted to hurt him.

"You need not remind me," she said contemptuously. "It was an impertinence better forgotten."

"I have not forgotten!" His voice grew hoarser and lower. She was surprised by a horrible sensation of fear. This man was not a gentleman, not to

be restrained by the code of a gentleman. If only some one would come! Where was Mr. Melville? The long deck was practically deserted at this end, and she felt momentarily paralyzed and unable to push past him as she wished.

"Miss Desmond, why are you so hard on me?" he said unexpectedly. "Did my old friend Nell Culverton give me a bad name?"

"Indeed she did not!" retorted Laurie. "It was left to you yourself to do that. I was disposed to like you until——"

Her voice choked in the remembrance of Cherry. How dared he ignore that shameful, degrading story! How dared he insult her, a helpless girl, defenceless on his ship, by that altered voice and those asking eyes!

"You pray sometimes, don't you?" he said rapidly, bending towards her. "I remember one sentence that seems part of a prayer—'Be merciful to me, a sinner!'"

The appeal was so unlooked for that it struck her dumb. A little of her youth and hardness was wearing off naturally with the course of time, and she softened involuntarily to the humbler suggestion of his words. The eyes that she raised were by no means warm with passion, tender, responsive to his own as he had tried to picture them, but they were no longer hostile.

"If I have been hard," she said slowly, holding out her hand, "I am sorry. But I am only human, not divine. Forgive my saying that I think you ask divine patience and consideration. Good-night, Captain Amyas."

CHAPTER XVI

"The burden of sad sayings. In that day
Thou shalt tell all thy days and hours, and tell
Thy times and ways and words of love, and say
How one was dear and one desirable,
And sweet was life to hear and sweet to smell;
But now with lights reverse the old hours retire,
And the last hour is shod with fire from hell.
This is the end of every man's desire."

A. C. SWINBURNE.

ON a dark rainy evening in November the *Seagull* left her berth in the docks at Hull, and steamed slowly out of harbour to the open seas. She was a big, heavy boat, low-powered, but with immense carrying capacity. Her owners were one of the large north-east trading firms, and sent her to most of the big ports in the world, but oftenest to Melbourne and Sydney. On this occasion, however, her cargo was not a rich one, though heavy; she was loaded down with ironwork for consignment at Brisbane, and her freeboard only just satisfied the Board of Trade regulations. Heavy, sullen, and slow, she ploughed her way out into the dark, dirty night, stared after by the crews of other boats as if her vanishing lights had something sinister about them.

Benson, her skipper, was short of hands, and though the *Seagull* was a well-found ship, the extra labour made the men grumble under breath. But scarred, blaspheming devils though most of them were, they

dared not speak out to the Master, for they feared him as they feared crazed men. He went about his work in a horrible silence, grim and ready, and he seemed to require neither rest nor sleep, for at all hours of the watch his wild face would thrust itself suddenly upon their consciousness, without their having been warned of his approach. With the superstition of their class they called his brooding uncanny, and whispered among themselves that the Old Man was touched, and best let alone. Even the heavy tramp steamer seemed to feel the oppression of a coming fate as she groaned and laboured over the heavy seas, or as if the dark cloud resting on Benson had affected her also.

And coming to meet her, half across the world, was the great racing Liner, the *Princess*, carrying her thousand passengers through the tropics, northwards, with the calm steady sweep of her resistless screws, which thrust her forward into the gaping mouth of her destiny. A fair thing, this 12,000 ton Liner, hurling herself from one hemisphere to another, through incalculable fathoms of blue water which might at any time overwhelm her!

Destiny is so naturally resented of mankind that it is almost always described as "a strange coincidence,"—or if it is possible to make Providence responsible, those who are conscience-stricken call it retribution. Benson, taking the sluggish *Seagull* out to the Bay, brooded on the chance of meeting his enemy in some port at last, and shooting him as he would have done a mad dog. D'Arcy Amyas hardly credited the warning that the man he had driven mad with the wrong done him had learned his name.

If he allowed the thought of a meeting to trouble him at all, it was as of a disagreeable thing that might have to be faced, but was not worth considering beforehand. He would avoid an encounter if he could—if it must be, he looked for it under circumstances where public opinion would not go hard against him. Neither man foresaw that the meeting might come on the high seas where they had passed their lives; and on board the *Princess* was no shadow of fear, but the sound of light laughter and women's voices about her decks, and all the epitome of life that goes on in the three or four weeks' enforced communication of an ocean voyage. Amyas counted his journeys by quarrels—there were five amongst his lady passengers that trip, three of which he settled himself—and by confidences, more than by wind and weather. When his most important passenger had taken him apart, and poured out a few secrets which might be worth thousands to know, under stress of the momentary intimacy, he considered the days as not ill-spent; sometimes, on looking back, he marvelled at the great personages who had eased their minds by a little cosy chat with the Captain. They probably forgot, or did not realize, the extent of their trust, but he found it useful afterwards in dealing with them again, though he never reminded them of his knowledge by a single indiscreet word. He had mixed with so many distinguished and really great people, titled and untitled, that he had unconsciously caught the breeding of the best in his outward manner, and was accounted a very pleasant man. It was seldom that any one saw the darker side of him as Laurie Desmond had

lone, to the point of denying him the right to the lastic title "gentleman." It was seldom also that ie made mistakes as he had done in her case, though is life had been of necessity not one in which to tudy individual character, but had made him supericially clever in managing men and women. It had been panoramic, like all Merchantmen's; the very Officers under him were hardly stationary figures, hanging as they frequently did before he knew nything of them except their professional capabilities. Here to-day, gone to-morrow; such had lways been the effect of the people with whom he ame in contact. He had learned to judge quickly, nd because he was generally attracted by the same raits and peculiarities he had rarely found himself at ault.

Laurie did not know how great an influence her onsistent attitude had gained her with D'Arcy. Since his appeal to her mercy she had kept an armed peace with him, and if he joined her and Miss Hyde he did not immediately go away; but he felt through t all that he never gained a step in her favour, and ie chafed against the knowledge. She did not perhaps hate him any more, but she regarded him with a bitter pity that robbed itself of all personal interest. He was conscious, while he talked to Mildred, of Laurie's serious eyes resting on him, until their sadness affected his own plastic nature, and he was sad oo, though for what he hardly knew. Other women ad not seemed to wish him different, and his nature vas too set in its groove by this time for sudden conersion; he only wondered blindly why she should ook on life from such a different standpoint, as he

was beginning to realize that she did, and he knew by instinct that she was grieving over something he was not, until her regret overshadowed him visibly as he sat by Mildred Hyde's wicker lounge, his elbows resting on his knees, his tanned face almost stern under the peak of his tilted cap. On one such occasion Laurie's presence absolutely lost him his self-possession, and woke him to the realization of his own feeling for her, in the midst of telling Mildred a rough prank of his apprentice days.

"—and the second Mate was asleep on his watch, so I and another boy got some tackle and made a tangle round him. Just then the Old Man came by, and we had only time to cut and run, for he yelled out an order and the Mate jumped up to see to it, and found he was tied to his post! He was swearin' like a madman, and if he could have caught us——"

He raised his head to laugh, and the sentence broke off short. The blood came up to his face, and his eyes were fixed on Laurie's, for something in his representation of himself as a boy, playing boyish tricks, but not yet a soul-grimed man, had made her smile tenderly. He made no attempt to finish the yarn; with a muttered word he got up and walked off down the deck, raising his cap mechanically.

He turned into his cabin, feeling as if he were drunk, and sat down to think. What was this overmastering excitement that threatened to choke him because a pair of grey eyes softened for him once? Ah! but that was just it—for once! He had learned by constant rebuffs to respect Laurie Desmond, and that had made a solid basis for his merely sensual emotions, and caused his fancy to live and grow

instead of dying out, scant nourishment though it got. She had never looked at him with anything but dislike and disapproval before, and the mere idea of winning her favour at last made him desperately anxious not to lose the advance he had made. She *should* care for him—even as he cared for her—never mind what it cost. Supposing—supposing that he was false to his theories, false to his self-interest, and married! Nothing less would gain him Laurie, he knew, though there was just enough of the wild beast in him, when not checked by caution, to make him resort to any pressure had he had the chance.

Supposing he married! Well, he knew that the good fortune which had attended his career would cease. But he had climbed high enough to dispense with help now, if he chose to risk it. He did not see that he could advance much more in his present position, and he was at an age when marriage looks attractive. Laurie's very coldness recommended her as a wife, for he had tested too many women's virtue to believe in it, save perhaps with such natures as hers. If she could resist him she would resist other men—he did not comprehend, but he had been forced to acknowledge, her principles—and he felt confident that he alone would have the right of her as her husband. His very point of view had become coarsened, even though he did St. Lawrence Desmond shallow justice.

There remained Laurie's own consent to be gained, but at least he would have a fair chance with her if he spoke honourably and openly. He was not sanguine, for his old intuitive sense was still too keen to mislead him; but he was feverishly anxious to "try

his luck," to make at least a beginning with Laurie. She should understand him—she should no longer be able to relegate him mutely to the ranks of those so beyond the pale that they could have no part in her life. No man who had asked a woman to be his wife could count absolutely for nothing in her memory of him at least. Laurie was well connected too and well dowered, but that did not really enter into his calculations, so absorbed was he in the desire to dominate herself. It was the more significant because up till now every woman who had been an influence in Amyas' life, with the exception of Dorothy Culverton, had been his material aid though she might have assisted his moral retrogression. Without exactly calculating upon it he had always looked for their assistance in his career—he had spoken the truth long since to Anstice Le Croix when he said that women had made him what he was.

Even the bringing his mind to such, to him, weighty conclusions, with regard to Laurie, did not, however, clinch the matter. He awaited an opportunity to bring off his final coup in vain. She was quite as anxious to avoid a *tête-à-tête* as he was to obtain it, and though she treated him with the same courtesy in public which she extended to any other man on board, he never contrived to catch her alone. She would seem, within the narrow limits of his own boat, to be somewhat at his mercy; but a single-minded woman bent on avoiding danger is safeguarded from any man while they are both within the bounds of civilized society. Amyas could only wait and watch, lest bolder tactics should defeat his own ends; while Laurie, recognizing that she was still being pursued,

ever relaxed her guard to foil him. To put herself nder the protection of any one—Mr. Melville, for nstance—was a confession of weakness of which she ever thought. Her very simplicity of creed made er own fortitude seem quite sufficient to her.

After leaving Cape Verde a slight epidemic of fever howed itself amongst the passengers, but it was nostly in the second-class, and none of the first-class assengers kept their berths even, except the vicar of t. Jervoise. Laurie missed him at breakfast one norning, but thought he was merely late, and meant o joke him about it when he came on deck. He did ot appear at luncheon, however, and she inquired or him, and learned that he was slightly feverish and ad kept his cabin. Mildred Hyde had been a victim he day before, and Laurie thought little of it, for the ilment had not been alarming—a slight rash, and a ry burning skin succeeded by a shivering fit, being he only symptoms in the worst cases. In a few ours it generally passed off, and the doctor had only rescribed mild doses of quinine. When the next ay passed without Mr. Melville reappearing, how-ver, Laurie was really sorry and a little anxious. hey had become something like intimate friends by his time, and she valued the courteous old clergyman ne more for his marked contrast to that other mascu-ne personality at present paramount in her life. She new, too, that Mr. Melville suffered from heart com-laint, which had been the cause of his taking the oyage to Africa in the hope of re-establishing his ealth. With vague misgivings she waylaid the Doctor and inquired for her friend.

"Oh, old Melville!" said the Officer, with a worried

knit in his brows. "Yes, he's been rather bad—the only bad case I've had. His temperature is too high."

"Surely it is not dangerous! I know his heart is weak."

"Oh, you needn't be anxious—it is only Cape Verde fever, really. He'd be all right if I could get his cabin altered. The one he has is too close, and they make such a confounded noise overhead. There are the sports coming off this afternoon too!"

"But why don't you move him, then?"

"The boat is too full unfortunately. His cabin is one of the few single ones on the ship, and I can't get any one to change who could cram in. I wanted to have him moved into mine, or else up on the boat deck—Travers would bunk with the third Officer with pleasure."

"Well?" said Laurie impatiently as he paused.

"Well, you see, the Skipper won't have it. He says it isn't etiquette for passengers to be up on the boat deck, and he won't let me shift my quarters either. Of course he's right in theory—the Purser and I are placed according to our work, and I'm next the surgery, and it would be a bit awkward to be in Mr Melville's cabin, but——"

The blood had risen slowly over Laurie's usually pale face, and her eyes were the eyes of an offended god—there was nothing feminine about them. She spoke slowly, with supreme contempt.

"If it is a case of illness I should have thought that Captain Amyas' prejudices might have given way to mere humanity!"

"Oh, well, you know, it wasn't as if he were dangerously ill," said the Doctor with a slightly embarrassed

mile. "I could have exerted my authority if he had een. It did not really matter, only I thought he ould have been better off, if the skipper hadn't rned rusty."

"Is it mere prejudice?" said Laurie, with a flash f anger in her threatening eyes.

"Well, he doesn't love parsons, you see!"

"I see. So Mr. Melville's honest profession is to tand in the way of his health, because the man in ommand of your boat has a despot's power and a espot's meanness!"

"Come, Miss Desmond, that's rather rough! The kipper is within his rights."

"He is abusing his rights!"

"I shouldn't care to tell him so!" said the Doctor ith a shrug of his shoulders. "Perhaps you would ke to try your persuasions for me?"

The flood of colour in her face deepened with nnoyance until it seemed to burn her. She looked t him in her most direct fashion to discover his eaning; but he was perfectly honest.

"Why do you ask me?" she said.

"Because you are the one woman on the ship who ouldn't touch him with a pair of tongs, and he nows it!" said the Doctor bluntly. "Forgive my aving noticed it, but I know you don't join in the eneral Captain-worship that goes on. If you asked favour you would be more likely to have it granted r that very reason. I believe your influence would o further than most—but I quite understand your luctance to ask it, and please do not think I am ressing the matter," he added hastily. "Old Melville in no danger."

Laurie turned away without speaking. Once mo
it seemed that the Fates were playing her a sorr
trick, and driving her into more intimate relatio
with Amyas. In the first instance her conscienc
had demanded that she should warn him of h
personal danger; in the second she had travelled o
his boat for Mildred Hyde's sake. Now it appeare
that she was to go a step further, and make an appe
to him for Mr. Melville. In all three cases her simpl
sense of what was right for herself—no intercours
with Amyas whatever—had been complicated by th
claims of other people.

But to put herself under an obligation, even i
some one else's behalf, was impossible! Her squa
white chin went up with the mere intolerable though
She saw it all in the light of those other interview
in his cabin, in both of which he had misconstrue
her attitude, and taken immediate and coarse adva
tage. If she deliberately sought him with the adde
handicap of a favour to ask, she sickened to thin
how she would be met. It was impossible. No o
could ask or expect her to put herself in such
position with a man of Amyas' stamp.

Mr. Melville, too, might get better. Laurie steele
her heart and went to luncheon, with the reproach
his empty chair spoiling her appetite; later on sh
wandered up to the promenade deck and looked d
blankly at the sports, shivering a little at each bur
of applause and the noise of running feet. Ho
this must sound overhead! How impossible it mu
be to rest! She thought of the kindly, cheery o
face and the cordial manner, and her eyes almo
filled with tears because she could not help him.

had been any one else to whom she must appeal he would at least have made the effort—but this, hough she was by no means at one with the Doctor s to her success, she would not even try to do.

There was to be a dance that night, the last dance f the voyage. They would keep it up late, and the oise of the dancing and the band would be worse han the sports. She counted it almost a godsend hat Mildred Hyde had a headache, and did not want o go on deck after dinner. Laurie sat with her in he cabin till she fell asleep, trying not to hear the roken music of the band and the sound of the flying eet. Her stern grey eyes did not follow the open ook lying on her knee, and her thoughts roamed estlessly between the narrow cabin where Mr. Mel- ille could not sleep, and the man whose caprice was he mean cause. She was harsh in her indignation, nd hated D'Arcy Amyas for his autocratic power nd what she felt was contemptible in his exercise f it.

By and by there came a lull in the sounds over- ead, the music and the rhythm of feet stopped. It as barely eleven o'clock, and she judged that the ancers had gone to supper. It was laid in the aloon, and the noise of the talking and movement here would be even nearer to the sick man. With desperate desire to distract herself she forced her rain to follow a few lines of Emerson's Essays, which he was still mechanically holding—

"A duty is no sooner divined than it becomes inding on us."

Laurie started up suddenly, as if thought had rown intolerable, and left the cabin after one glance

at Mildred to assure herself that she still sle
The alleyway was deserted, and Laurie turned in t
direction of the foc's'le and made her way as far as t
third-class. As she emerged on to the lower dec
she saw that the night had turned foggy—beyo
the ship's side was a grey blanket drawn about h
in dense folds. There was an awful stillness in th
unknown element into which they were driving, f
the speed did not seem to her to have been slowe
down, though she now heard that the fog-horn w
going incessantly. The girl ran up the companio
to the promenade deck quickly, as if the impulse
movement were still upon her; the deck was close
in with bunting for the dance, but between the e
temporized walls she caught a glimpse of that sam
dense drapery, mysterious and implacable, foldi
the ship like a shroud. For a minute she caught
the rail gasping, with a nervous fancy that the fo
creeping round the *Princess* shut out the world
safety and law like an untoward fate. There w
another world — one of strange passion and lo
boundaries—inside this thick mantle, and she w
all alone with it. The ship was moving in a sphe
of her own, a phantom thing, not of earth and everyda
life at all.

The deck was deserted, even the band having take
the opportunity to go below and refresh, but fro
behind the half-drawn curtain of the Captain's cab
shone a steady light, and some one was moving abo
there. He was there then; she had had a momenta
hope that he would be on the bridge, and that s
might have a respite without being able to help
Her feet seemed suddenly weighted with lead as s

vent slowly and more slowly towards the doorway. The fog was here too ; through the grey veil she saw the electric globes staring at her like two stricken eyes.

Her light knock at the door was not answered for an instant. Then Amyas' voice said " Come in ! " in the crisp tone of his command. He thought it was one of his Officers, believing that all the passengers were safely engaged in the amusement he had encouraged to distract their attention from the fog. No sailor likes fog, but Amyas was not nervous even when it threatened to be thick in the Channel as it did to-night. He had but just come off the bridge, and run down to his room for a cigar to keep the fog out of his lungs, leaving Somers, the third Mate, on watch. The Navigating Officer was getting his rest before the hour came for him to go on duty, and the Chief Officer had been acting as master of the ceremonies at the dance, with the assistance of his junior. Had Amyas removed all his Officers from their midst, contrary to his custom, he feared that the passengers might see cause for alarm—which he did not wish. At any rate he preferred to share the watch himself until the others should have finished their social duties, and even then he might not see fit to turn in.

He looked towards the door, expecting that the Chief Officer had caught him for a moment's consultation, and saw Laurie Desmond. By some law of telepathy she had been in his thoughts all night, and the feeling that she had baffled him and would have escaped from his influence altogether in a certain number of hours now, had made him set his teeth in impotent resentment of the fate which had

thrust this girl into his life to shake his satisfactio in himself and it. He could not make her care fo him—he could not even wrest a chance to make last appeal to her from her icy determination t have nothing to do with him. And now behold sh stood before him in the doorway, very white, ver motionless, and with a purpose of some kind in seekin him.

For a minute he did not speak. They stood the in the little brightly-lighted space, two warring perso alities, conscious of each other's alien strength, whi the ship throbbed steadily on her way. Through th silence Laurie heard the incessant scream of the fo signals, and faintly from below the clatter and talkin of the passengers at supper. It seemed to her tha the ship was like a thing in terror of her life—a human thing mad with fear of the unknown eleme into which she was forced, blind and helpless—whi they all went on carelessly laughing and makin merry.

"What is it?" said Amyas at last hoarsely.

"I want to speak to you. May I come in?"

"Yes—I can only give you a few minutes. I mu be back on the bridge." Yet he calculated hurriedl in his own mind that Somers was perfectly competen and it was safe to leave him by himself; he was urge by the most powerful personal desire he had ev known to grasp this chance offered him, even thoug it was against his soundest principles. The fog wa lifting, through one of those inexplicable freaks weather at sea, and indeed for some half-hour it wa possible to see not only the lights but the dim outlin of passing ships. The fog-horn was still blaring o

ts deafening warning, but as Amyas cast a hasty lance towards the doorway he saw that the night vas comparatively clear—and there was the woman ıe wanted "*so badly*" within unexpected reach! Nothing could happen in his absence—he must wait . minute and hear what she wanted, and the delight of sudden hope made him feel half reckless, half ightheaded. He turned involuntarily and drew the urtain over the doorway; she heard the impatient attle of the rings under his hand, while she stood, vithout knowing it, just where Cherry had stood the irst time she came into this same place.

"I want to ask a favour of you—for Mr. Melville."

She spoke in curt sentences like a child who epeats too strenuous a lesson, and her voice was ıot that of one who asks a favour. He saw her lift ıer chin in a way peculiar to her, and met the resentnent in the stone-grey eyes with a glint in his own. She walked deliberately across the cabin and stood vith her back to his berth, as once before when she ad told him about Cherry. He remembered the ttitude, which suggested a man with his back to the vall fighting against unfair odds. His own face owered and hardened.

"What about him?"

"He is ill with fever, and his cabin is an inner one vhere all the noise reaches him. Could he not be ıoved?"

"Certainly, if the Purser can find an empty cabin or rrange an exchange."

Her face altered from white to red, and the slumberng indignation in her heart woke once more. "You now that is impossible!" she said curtly. "There is

no single-berth cabin which would do. Why cannot he exchange with the Doctor, or be moved up to the boat deck?"

"Because I do not choose to have my decision questioned, Miss Desmond," said Amyas quietly. "I see that the suggestion havin' been made to me has reached your ears. I have already declined to permit it."

She looked at him steadily for a moment, the condemnation in her set young face driving him mad, though she was unconscious of it. "You are a tyrant!" she said deliberately.

"My dear child, how can you assert that kind of heroic nonsense when you can't pretend to understand my reasons for giving certain orders!" he said, frowning, but with a half-smile as if he found her indeed so childish that he would not be vexed. "I am Master of this ship, and know what I am doin'. I will have none of the passengers berthed up on the boat deck, parsons or not."

"If Mr. Melville were not a clergyman you would not have made this difficulty," said Laurie unwisely. "It is simply prejudice."

Undoubtedly she was very fearless, to face the Master of the *Princess* with such an accusation. The controlled, haughty surprise with which he looked at her reached her even through her bigoted conviction that she was telling a blunt, unwelcome truth. All the acquired polish and training of his life stood Amyas in excellent service at the moment, and it was Laurie who was at a disadvantage.

"Miss Desmond, you are presumin' on the fact that you are a young lady, to say things that I do not

choose to resent," he said coolly. "May I ask you to leave the management of my ship in my hands, and kindly not to interfere further?"

When Laurie was really bitterly hurt, or offended, or touched, down to the depths of her nature, she turned white instead of red. She was as ashen as a lifeless woman now, and her lips were stiff when she spoke.

"I beg your pardon. The mistake was mine. I wish"—nothing but her rigid sense of her own duty could have driven her on now where a weaker woman would have let well alone—"I wish you could have seen your way to do me the favour, which I am sorry I asked in an offensive manner."

She spoke very simply, and leaving her position against the berth she made a step towards the doorway. It required all her will to keep herself steady, and Amyas was between her and the way of retreat. She stood helpless till he should move. . . .

Up on the bridge Somers, the third Officer, was aware of a light on the port side—the lights of a large boat riding low in the water, which had silently crept inside the curtain of fog until she was visible in the clearer atmosphere immediately around the *Princess*. She was some half-mile away, and he reckoned her as a cargo boat, even while he ordered the Company's signals to be shown. The proximity of the boat made him vaguely uneasy, and he wished that the Captain would come back to the bridge. Sole charge was no light matter, and the fog might shut down on them again at any minute, with the chance of a collision. The cargo boat hung in sight, and he could

not understand her proceedings. The *Princess's* fog-horn shrieked as if warning the strange boat away; but she blew no syren herself. . . .

Down in the Captain's cabin the mental strain shut out all thought of the material world. Amyas did not even hear the fog-horn, though his practised ear would have missed it had it ceased. He was conscious of nothing but the girl's slight repellent figure and humiliated white face.

"I would do so if I could—for you!" he said suddenly, his voice hoarsening and his face altering from its mask of cold denial. "I wish you hadn't asked me." Then his calm broke up altogether, the raging jealousy in him betraying itself and over-mastering his acquired manners. "What the devil makes you take this interest in the damned priest?" he said fiercely.

She stepped back from him, startled and horrified, and once more unconsciously fell into her position by the berth. His face was flushed and broken out of all pretence of indifference, and he looked at her with wild resentment.

"Do you care for him?" he said harshly.

"Care for him! For Mr. Melville! You must be mad!" she stammered, frightened by the storm of his words and manner, and outraged by the unmistakable suggestion of his question. "Can I not speak to a man with common courtesy but I must be credited with a certain tenderness for him?" she exclaimed, with a sense of personal injury. "Besides, he is an old man, and has been kind to me as he might to his own daughter."

"I don't know what your 'common courtesy' is

like," said D'Arcy gloomily. "You have never shown it to me!"

She looked up at him with a wordless answer in her eyes. Who could show this man common courtesy without risking an encroachment, or defiling themselves by the mere intercourse? she thought. She drew her garments metaphorically away from the suggestion.

"If you would be kinder to me," D'Arcy stammered suddenly, carried away by his own impulse, "you could do anythin' with me—I'd let you walk over me if you liked. Can't you? Give me the hope of bein' somethin' to you, and see what you can make of me! Come, I'm sure you approve of missions—here's a mission ready to your hand!"

He spoke fast and excitedly now, and moved nearer to her with his hands outstretched as if in appeal. But she nearly uttered a cry of fear, her panic making her think that he was going to seize her.

"What are you talking about?" she said breathlessly. "What do you mean? I have no influence over you—I wish to have none!"

"You can't help it—you've got it already!" he retorted recklessly. "You've been gainin' a power over me ever since I've known you that no other woman ever had. You can't get rid of that responsibility—take the rest!"

"What do you mean?"

"Be my wife!" he said thickly, and the blood beat in his throat and threatened to choke him in his supreme excitement. "I've never asked another woman that—but I ask *you!* I want you—I want

you—*so badly!*" The man's passionate utterance resolved itself into the old boyish phrase. He fell back on his own simplicity to try and express his most potent desire.

But the girl saw only the degradation of what he offered her, according to her own standpoint. In a flash of horror she thought what it would be to give this man the right to possess her body and soul—to assert and exercise that right in every way, as he most certainly would. She fancied his pressing such a claim, in order to please himself, without the least consideration for her. It was not only material things that made Amyas' demand dreadful and unsupportable to Laurie; the idea of such a mind as his in free communication with her own, made her quite as revolted. As to that influence over him which he asserted she possessed, she did not believe in its reality at all.

"I *could* not!" she exclaimed, with such obvious repulsion that he stopped short as if she had lifted her strong young hand and struck him. "Think what I know of—of what you have done! How can you ask any clean woman to so much as—as look at you!"

"Ah—don't!" His voice was like a caught sob. Through the sudden cruelty of her words he was brought to realize, at least dimly, what he had lost; he saw with all his horrible quickness of intuition that there had been another side of life at which he had never cared to look. He had forfeited it without a pang of regret; but now he saw himself as abominable, beyond the pale, in the eyes of a "clean woman."

"I've never had a chance!" he pleaded hoarsely, in

a wild appeal to some beautiful and holy thing which he saw incarnated in the girl before him. "Won't you help me? I roughed it since I was a little chap, and I lost touch with—with what you good women take as natural. Perhaps it wasn't natural to me, and there was no one to keep me up to it, and so I lost it!" He looked at the repellent young face, and saw his judgment there—a reluctant judgment perhaps, for Laurie was, as he said, a good woman, but justice without mercy nevertheless. It takes a Christ to accept repentance, and not to shrink from the sinner; the Good Women who follow Him have always been as the Wise Virgins, and shut the gate with that "Too late!" flung in the face of what they, as mortals, condemn.

"I am sorry," said Laurie, with a little set to her head that thrust his sins between them.

He looked at her with the helplessness of some strayed dog that can only expect kicks or blows from the superior race of humanity. In the silence something rang—six bells it seemed—and still the fog-horn cried its warning to the dangerous, desolate seas. . . .

The movements of the cargo boat which had so puzzled the Officer on the watch had resolved themselves into her being put about. He could not understand it, or her signals either. She was racing the *Princess* now, only a hundred yards or so away, and was asking questions by flashes. He read the Morse off, as he stood there directing the answer.

"The *Seagull* of Hull—Davitt and Co. Tell them we are the *Princess*—what on earth makes them ask? Have they lost their bearings?"

The *Seagull* flashed back, "Who is her Master?"

"Have we got a criminal on board, and is this a police raid?" muttered Somers. "I wish the Old Man would come up and give his own visiting-card!" But thinking that it might be something serious, and in the absence of instructions, he flashed back the Master's name across the short space of foggy sea between the boats.

"Captain Amyas!" . . .

The owner of the name turned at that moment from the denial in Laurie Desmond's face, and the iron of his despair entered into his soul. "You are not sorry—you are hard!" he said bitterly. Then, as she moved to pass him, he caught her gown in his strong hands as if he recognized a last hope of salvation.

"Laurie! Laurie! you're thrustin' me further into the hell you've just shown me. I never realized it before—I know I'm a dam' bad lot—don't leave me there—help me to get rid of some of the mire—won't you?—won't you?" he prayed, groping with uncertain, stammering words after a dim ideal. It was strange to D'Arcy Amyas to hesitate, or to reach up to a higher standard, and he felt out for something to help him in the new faint effort.

Laurie was not sufficiently interested in him to concern herself with his salvation, and she shrank from his eagerness with the distaste of her very purity. What was this tardy repentance but a new phase of his uncontrolled passions! The dislike of such a type as D'Arcy Amyas was in her very movement as she turned her fine cold face away from him. Her own freedom from contamination was more to her than his possible redemption—she desired no influence

over him, as she had said—for she hated impurity with every sense she possessed, and had no pity for it where she suspected its presence.

"Let me go!" she said quietly, her stone-grey eyes turned to the doorway, and her whole body alert to escape. "I will have nothing to do with such men as you. You have forfeited your right to any decent woman's love long since—you could neither value nor understand it."

She felt her gown free, and sprang through the doorway. In the background of her mind was an impression that he had fallen back from the blow of her last words, and she seemed to know that he was leaning rather heavily against the writing-table, like a man who is holding up under a gunshot wound—Colonel Desmond had once described it to her. Her heart was throbbing with the late excitement, and her knees trembled beneath her, but she was not softened for knowing that he still leaned where she had left him, numb with the blow she had dealt—the man who had suddenly realized that he who had reverenced no woman was reverenced of none. He was outside the pale by his own action; no good woman would defile herself by touching him if she had her choice. And he yearned after this unknown purity of the Good Woman as though it were divine.

The *Princess* was still labouring through the fog, which, as Somers had feared, had thickened again as suddenly as though they had driven straight into another wall of it. He had lost all trace of the other boat as suddenly as she had first loomed like a phantom thing through the thinned grey veil. The *Princess's* fog-horn shrieked with terror, and as

Laurie reached the deckhouse, the deck seemed to quiver under her feet. There was something happening—a grinding—a shock to the whole vessel. Yet it was so slight, or so sudden, that no one seemed to be alarmed, for as she paused she heard nothing—no sound of running feet or any alarm. But she stopped short, her movement arrested as if without her will. Then she turned and ran back along the deck to Amyas' cabin.

She met him just as he tore aside the curtain and stepped out on to the deck. She could not frame the words "Have we struck?" for her recent excitement had jarred her nerves, but she laid her hand on his arm and looked up at him to learn the danger from his face. All the hardness had gone out of her own; she was no longer a woman, outraged and condemnatory—the startled fear in her eyes made her like a child who seeks succour of one more powerful than itself. They were on the starboard side of the ship, and nothing was visible round them save the grey fog beyond the canvas, which barely showed the hungry black sea as the boat plunged and rolled uneasily. If another vessel had struck them it must have been amidships on the port side, abaft the bridge, fracturing the bulkhead between the two largest compartments and practically opening them to the sea.

The old sick fear had surged up over D'Arcy even as he flung back his curtain and turned to the bridge. Even in that moment he listened to hear the bell ring to the engine-room, but there was no sound. Where was Somers? He put his hand on the ladder rail as Laurie appeared at his side, with the half-

second's instinctive pause for the fear to pass and leave him tensely strung as usual. But her face appealing to him shook his nerve as the ship's danger had not done—he tried for the old recovery, and, mad with terror, realized that it would not come. He could hardly stand, and all the training of his life could not force his feet up the ladder. He flung his arm round the girl as she clung to him, and spoke in a loud tone of confidence that seemed no part of himself.

"There is nothin' to be afraid of. You are quite safe—with me. I'm goin'——"

A second shudder through the great boat, a sullen roll in spite of her mighty engines still trying to thrust her steadily forward, a plunge as if the *Princess* fought with her unknown death, and she went down as quick and alive as ever were the tribes of Korah, into her tomb of waters, while her Master still struggled for the impulse to try and save her. From the moment when those strange bows ground into her side, to the final plunge into the yawning grave beneath her, was barely three minutes.

The unseen foe that had wrought the destruction swung round but just in time to avert being hampered in the sinking of the mighty Liner. A heavy, big boat she had looked from the bridge, crashing death through the fog, but she was smaller than the ship she had doomed. Her crew, with dark horrified faces, stood peering over the side, their hands already at work to get the boats out of the davits, when the voice of their Skipper ordered them to wait. All help was needed to ascertain her own damage. She rolled heavily on the turbulent water stirred by that

awful engulfment. Her crew stared silently at the Skipper, who had not attempted to rescue any from the doom he had caused.

"Man the boats!"

His voice rang out at last, and half fearfully the boats were lowered into the fog and the rocking seas. But afterwards they told the tale in far-off places round the world where trade drove them, of how he stood at the gangway and peered with bloodshot eyes into the drowned faces of the few who were rescued. And once when a dripping bearded body was carried past him he uttered a fierce cry, and made a motion as though to hurl it back to the unappeased seas, but looking closer muttered that it was not he, and let it pass.

Of all those fifteen hundred on board the *Princess*, but forty were rescued by the vessel which had wrought her destruction—the S.S. *Seagull* of Hull. The great Liner had gone down, with Captain and crew and passengers; and somewhere, on her deck perhaps, at the bottom of the ocean, lay the two bodies of a man and a girl—the man's arm still clasping in death the one woman he was not to have in life.

* * * * *

Amongst the survivors was the third Officer of the *Princess*, Charles Somers, who stated that at the moment when he felt the two ships collide, the bowsprit of the *Seagull* had literally swept him from the bridge, breaking the davits of the for'ard boat, and tearing the dodger away as the *Seagull* swung round. He had been swept off as cleanly as a broom might sweep a cobweb from the wall, and had escaped with

his life by clinging to the broken rigging of the bowsprit as he felt himself dragged overboard. He had had no chance to reach the telegraph, but in his opinion it would have been too late to save the ship. The Captain was not on the bridge with him at the time of the accident. He had left him on the watch about half-an-hour before, intending to return at once. Somers had been wondering what had detained him, for he was always most careful as to keeping a double watch, particularly in a fog. He stated that after Amyas left him, however, the fog lifted, and showed him a heavy cargo boat about half-a-mile away. She had signalled by flashes that she was the S.S. *Seagull*, and had asked not only the name of the *Princess* but that of her Captain. Thinking that they were in some difficulty, and having no instructions, he had signalled back Captain Amyas' name. The *Seagull* had then been put about, and was running parallel to the *Princess*, about a hundred yards apart. Her proximity had made him anxious, but he was not really alarmed until the fog had thickened as suddenly as it had lifted. The lights of the *Seagull* were wiped out as if by a curtain, and before he could decide on any alteration of course the two boats had collided. The atmosphere was so thick at the time of the accident that he had seen nothing till the bowsprit actually struck him, and though the fog-horn had been going incessantly, it had sounded muffled even on their own boat. He was keeping the watch on the lower bridge, the fog for some reason being rather less dense nearer the water than it was above, and the speed had been slowed down from sixteen to twelve knots.

When Messrs. Savernake had made an inquiry into the circumstances of the case, to satisfy the public that clamoured and wailed at the glass doors in Aldgate, they published an explanation. To their own loss, and deep regret and sympathy with all concerned, the R.M.S. *Princess* had been run down in the Channel by the S.S. *Seagull*, owing to the fog, the *Seagull's* Captain being unable to locate the direction of the fog-horn which the survivors testified was sounding the whole evening. A certain carelessness and vote of censure might be written up against the name of the Master of the *Seagull*, Joseph Benson, whose certificate the Board of Trade confiscated; but it hardly mattered, because the unfortunate man was proved to be of unsound mind, and died in a lunatic asylum not six months later. The tragedy which he had caused was said to be quite sufficient to derange his mind, his record from his Owners being indisputable, and he himself well known in every trading port as one of the soundest of Merchant Skippers. The fog was the only explanation of his disaster, and even the best men may make mistakes under such circumstances.

But behind locked doors in Savernakes' offices the chiefs of the Line had sat with set faces and grim mouths, listening to the ravings of this same man as he swore with thickened utterance that what he had done was well done, and that were it to do again he would do it, for he counted the hundreds of lives sacrificed as nothing in the fulfilment of his reckoning with *one*. As soon as he learned that the boat passing his own in the darkness was the *Princess*, and that Amyas was still her Master, he had put the *Seagull*

about, and as the fog thickened and prevented those on board her seeing his intention and avoiding a collision, he had run her down—run her down on the high seas, and sunk her with intention. The impulse might well be described as temporary insanity, but Joseph Benson, rolling bloodshot eyes at his auditors, laughed at the idea of repenting it. D'Arcy Amyas was Jonah, and his ship had gone to prove it with all those on board. The story of his life and its sins and follies was told in red words to the grim circle sitting in judgment after his death; but Savernakes' kept the secret of their servant, for by dishonouring his memory they would but bring discredit on themselves.

It was long remembered how Bernard Savernake spoke on this occasion. His keen foresight and common-sense had never been more apparent, and as he stood addressing the Board his words had the force and clearness of a young man, though he was over seventy.

"And, gentlemen," he said in conclusion, "Captain Amyas having gone before a higher tribunal, it is beyond our power to censure him. The publication of such a strange and horrible story would only cause still more bitter regret and indignation amongst those whose relatives or friends were on the ill-starred boat, and we can offer them no reparation. Poor Benson is so obviously irresponsible for his actions that the affair looks like arranging itself. I can only urge a vote of absolute silence upon you."

The man to second the vote was Sir Arthur Hyde, the Chairman. He remembered that it was mainly through his instrumentality that the doomed ship had been given to D'Arcy Amyas, over the heads of older

men, and his face was grey and grief-stricken as he inwardly took the blame upon himself. But he forgot to whose influence he owed that disastrous urging of Captain Amyas' merits on the Board.

Bernard Savernake left the office that day a thoughtful man, and drove West to his private house in Kensington with fresh wrinkles round his eyes, and the half-moon mouth strikingly prominent.

"I said I would put off my final judgment until the eleventh hour," he said. "It seems almost to have been a prophecy. . . . I wonder what it was that he wanted *so badly* as to risk fifteen hundred souls in trying to obtain it?"

He leaned back in the hansom, meditating. His cab was blocked in Piccadilly, and a newsboy, running almost under the horse's head, shouted a "Special" so that the newsbill was really audible.

"More details of the *Princess* disaster!—'orrible story by the survivors!"

"But they will not tell the real story!" said Mr. Savernake.

THE END

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